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Contribution of immigrant teachers to the promotion of multicultural education in Finnish schools

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The thesis deals with the contribution of immigrant teachers to the promotion of multicultural education in Finnish elementary and lower-secondary schools. The purpose of this research was to find out how immigrant teachers can contribute to the promotion of multicultural education in Finnish schools. The work aims to discover what could be the appropriate environment to facilitate the contribution of immigrant teachers to promoting multicultural teaching and learning in Finnish schools.

The thesis presents a qualitative research study carried in Finland during the school year 2015–2016. The research data were collected through a questionnaire and group interviews in the frame of theme interviews. Eighteen immigrant teachers participated in providing information for this research work. The interviewees were originally from nine countries: Spain, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Estonia, Mexico, China, and Senegal/Finland, and they represented different schools from twelve cities in Southern, Central, and Eastern Finland. At the time of the research, immigrant teachers were participating in a continuing education program for immigrant teachers at a Finnish university. The data analysis was conducted via content analysis, which focused on the understanding, explanation, and interpretation of the information provided by the immigrant teachers.

Research results indicate that the immigrant teachers are motivated and willing to participate in the promotion of multicultural education in Finnish schools provided that there is a convenient and an adequate environment to facilitate their integration in the school communities. The integration of immigrant teachers depends primarily on the teachers' own initiatives to adapt to the Finnish school environment and the education system; however, it is also the responsibility of the Finnish school staff members to facilitate the integration of immigrant teachers in the school communities.

Research results indicate also that immigrant teachers have gained professional skills and intercultural competence along their work experiences. They are confident about their abilities to assume other responsibilities at school; however, their employment conditions remain insecure and unfavourable for their participation as active members in promoting multicultural education in their workplace. Immigrant teachers should be treated as regular schoolteachers in order to contribute effectively to the education of immigrant pupils and to the promotion of multicultural learning for all school pupils.

The promotion of multicultural education should be considered as a shared task between educators, policy makers, and all members of the school communities including immigrants, and should be based on intercultural cooperation between immigrants and the Finnish community, respecting shared values of tolerance, mutual respect, and appreciation of cultural differences. The contribution of immigrant teachers to promoting multicultural education is a participation to the promotion of the well-being of immigrants and the Finnish community in multicultural schools and overall in the Finnish multicultural society.

Key words: immigrant, immigrant teacher, multiculturalism, multicultural education, multicultural school, intercultural communication, intercultural cooperation

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1 INTRODUCTION

This research work is a study about the contribution of immigrant teachers to the promotion of multicultural education in Finnish elementary and lower-secondary schools. The aim of this research is to promote the integration of immigrant teachers as active members in school communities in order to enhance the development and the promotion of multicultural teaching and learning. This research is situated in the field of multicultural education, and it is related to the recent socio-cultural change in the Finnish society, particularly in the Finnish educational institutions.

Due to globalization and the increase of mobility and internationalisation in the last decades, multicultural education has received a great attention in the political and social discourse in Finland. The continuous increase of immigrant population in Finland urged education policy makers, educators, and researchers to pay more attention to the development and the promotion of multicultural education in educational institutions. Multicultural education facilitates the interaction of people with different cultures and helps to build a mutual understanding of tolerance, solidarity, and cultural sensitivity between immigrants and the host community. Research studies argue that the increase of the number of immigrant children at schools tends to generate rejection, discrimination, and racism at the hosting school communities toward immigrants. The promotion of multicultural education may reduce such discriminative attitudes in educational institutions.

Cultural identity is considered a major factor in the development of intercultural communication skills and the promotion of immigrants' integration in a multicultural society. In order to help immigrant children learn and preserve their own language and cultural identity, immigrant teachers are employed in Finnish schools to teach immigrant pupils their native language and religion. In addition, they teach immigrant pupils Finnish and Swedish as second languages and assist them with native-language support teaching. In addition to providing support for immigrant pupils, immigrant teachers can also participate in the promotion of multicultural learning for all school pupils. The purpose of this research is to call attention to immigrant teachers' experiences and opinions on the acknowledgement of

cultural diversity and the promotion of multicultural teaching and learning in Finnish schools. Furthermore, the aim of this research is to raise awareness about the significance of the role of immigrant teachers as active members of school communities in the promotion of multicultural education in Finnish schools.

In this research study, the research problem is to find out how immigrant teachers can contribute to the promotion of multicultural education in elementary and lower-secondary schools in Finland. Two research questions are used to solve the research problem. The first question is: How immigrant teachers can contribute to the promotion of multicultural education at school? The second question is: What is the adequate environment for immigrant teachers to participate in the promotion of multicultural education at schools?

This research work is a qualitative research, which focuses primarily on the understanding, the explanation, and the interpretation of immigrant teachers' experiences and reflections on how they can participate as active members of the school communities to promoting multicultural education. The aim of this qualitative research is to construct a holistic understanding of the actual situations of immigrant teachers as active members in the school communities and to reach a deeper understanding of the significance of their contribution to the promotion of multicultural education in their workplaces.

In this empirical research study, research data were collected through a questionnaire and group interviews in the frame of theme interviews. Eighteen immigrant teachers from different schools in Finland provided information for this research work. Research data analysis was conducted via content analysis, which was based on the understanding, the explanation, and the interpretation of the research data within the research theoretical framework. In this work, research ethical issues were explained and justified, and the research work was assessed along the research process.

This research emphasizes the need for the development of intercultural communication and intercultural cooperation at schools, which are essential for the promotion of multicultural education. Intercultural cooperation and cross-cultural learning require the interaction and the active participation of people with different cultures in order to create a multicultural school environment. The Finnish national core curriculum for basic education (2014) insists on the acknowledgement of cultural diversity and the promotion of interaction of people with different cultural backgrounds. Raising awareness of cultural diversity, promoting cultural sensitivity, and enhancing the adaptation to different cultures are considered a shared task of all members of the school communities. However, previous

research studies indicated that immigrant teachers have had difficulties to integrate in Finnish school communities. As a consequence, they were not often involved, among other members of the school communities, in the creation of a multicultural learning environment and the promotion of multicultural teaching and learning.

In Finland, there have been recently many studies in the field of education and social sciences related to immigrant school children and their integration in educational institutions. Many studies focused on the promotion of multiculturalism and the development of intercultural competences of Finnish schoolteachers and administrators. However, immigrant teachers have not been subject to broad research studies. This may be explained by the fact that they were only a few at schools. Research studies argue that it is important to investigate the experience of immigrant teachers in the education field; such tradition does not exist in Finland. (Koskinen-Sinisalo 2015, 11–12.)

Recent research studies in Finland focused particularly on immigrant teachers' professional skills and their working conditions. Other studies were concerned by immigrant teachers' conceptions of multiculturalism and their experiences in the Finnish school system and the Finnish education policies. Previous studies on the development of multicultural education in Finnish schools focused on how Finnish educators can enhance multicultural learning at schools; however, there haven't been many research studies emphasizing the role of immigrant teachers in the promotion of multicultural education in Finnish schools. This research work is primarily concerned with immigrant teachers' participation as active members in Finnish school communities to promoting multicultural teaching and learning.

Immigrant teachers are employed in different educational institutions in Finland. This research focuses particularly on immigrant teachers who are employed in basic education, which includes elementary and lower-secondary school education. This research is based mainly on the concepts of multiculturalism, cultural identity, intercultural communication, intercultural competence, and intercultural cooperation. The research data analysis focuses on three major themes. The first theme is about the cooperation and the active participation of immigrant teachers in school communities, the second theme concerns the recognition and the appreciation of multiculturalism at schools, and the third theme deals with the integration of immigrant teachers in school communities.

This work can be beneficial to further research studies in the education field and other related research fields. The research results obtained in this work can be transferred to future studies on the development of immigrant teachers' professional skills, for example the

development of the education programs for immigrant teachers. Moreover, this research provides information for future studies on the implementation of the new Finnish national core curriculum for basic education (2014) regarding the support of cultural diversity and the recognition of cultural differences in school communities. This research can also contribute to future research studies on the development of intercultural communication skills and the promotion of equity and justice for all members of school communities regardless of their cultural backgrounds.

The thesis is organized as follows. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 provide the background information on the research topic and situate the research study in its theoretical background. Chapter 5 explains the implementation process of this research, and Chapter 6 presents the research results. Chapter 7 presents a discussion of the research results and an evaluation of the research work. Chapter 8 concludes the research work with a summary of the purpose, the significance, and the outcomes of this research and a reflection on further challenges related to this work.

2 MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT

The development of multicultural education in the Finnish society became nowadays necessary due to the rise of multiculturalism. Intercultural communication skills and awareness of cultural diversity are considered the basis of the promotion of multicultural education. This chapter presents the concepts of multiculturalism, multicultural education, and intercultural communication and provides an overview of their development in the Finnish society and particularly in Finnish basic education.

2.1 The rise of multiculturalism

The concept of multiculturalism is generally understood as the coexistence of communities with different languages, cultures, and religions in the same society (UNESCO 2006, 17). Multiculturalism is also perceived as the interaction of people with different cultures in a society with mutual respect of diversity and mutual adaptation to cultural differences (Kivisto & Faist 2010, 175). The concept of multiculturalism has been used in the past two decades in multiple ways to promote ethnical and cultural differences in cross-cultural relations. The Canadian government began to use the term “multiculturalism” in the 1970s to outline policies for the promotion of tolerance and the respect of cultural differences. (Kivisto & Faist 2010, 161, 165.)

Multiculturalism is considered a worldwide phenomenon. The global community is rapidly becoming more and more multicultural due to the globalization of capital and labour markets and the increase of international mobility (Kivisto & Faist 2010, 47). Recently, the number of refugees and asylum-seekers has considerably increased in European countries due to the deterioration of the living conditions in their home countries. Europe has been historically multicultural, where many ethnical minorities co-exist with the majority of the population; nevertheless, nationalism remains dominating in many European societies, who want to preserve their national identity (Launikari & Puukari 2005, 15).

Due to the increase of the number of immigrants in Finland in the middle of the 1990s, the concept of multiculturalism was introduced in public debates to promote multicultural interaction, decrease prejudices, and enhance the tolerance of cultural differences in the Finnish society. Multiculturalism and internationalization were promoted in Finland by increasing exchange programs of international students, teachers, and researchers and expending international research projects and international collaboration. Finnish students, researchers, and teachers were also encouraged to participate in exchange programs abroad. (Matinheikki-Kokko & Pitkänen 2006, 70.)

Regardless of internationalization and the increase of foreign communities, the cultural, ethnical and linguistic diversity in Finland was limited to only small groups, and the national unity prevailed among the majority of the Finnish population. Recently, with the continuous flux of immigrants, many social minorities are seeking the recognition of their cultures and the right to be politically influential in the Finnish society. They claim that diversity and differences among people in the Finnish society cannot be disregarded anymore and that people should have the opportunity to live and work together in the society regardless of their differences. (Raunio, Säävälä, Hammar-Suutari & Pitkänen 2011, 18–19.)

Multiculturalism is outlined in the Finnish educational policies as an ideological demand for the education of immigrants. The aim of multiculturalism in educational institutions is to enrich cultural diversity, increase tolerance of cultural differences, and reduce prejudice. The Finnish teacher's education programs are expected to emphasize the recognition of cultural diversity and the promotion of multiculturalism. However, teacher's education programs must go beyond the simple adoption of educational policies; they must target more appropriate multicultural practices depending on the needs of teachers and pupils. In order to implement multicultural education at school, teachers must be confident about their multicultural skills and must be aware of the significance of multicultural education. (Matinheikki-Kokko & Pitkänen 2006, 84, 103.)

2.2 Emergence of multicultural education

Following the rise of multiculturalism in the Finnish society, multicultural education has emerged in Finnish educational institutions to address the social and educational needs of a multicultural society and face the challenges of the integration of immigrants in Finnish school communities. Banks (2004, xii) defines multicultural education as "*a field of study,*

which is designed to increase educational equity for all pupils, and which incorporates contents, concepts, principles, theories, and paradigms from history, social and behavioural sciences, and particularly from ethnic studies and women studies into pedagogy and curriculum development in education settings." Multicultural education was developed in the United States in the 1960s as an outcome of the civil rights movement to eliminate discrimination in public places. The purpose of multicultural education was to raise awareness among American children about the history of their country. The aim was also to provide children with equal educational opportunities. The Anti-bias Curriculum, which was published in the United States In 1989, contributed to the introduction of multicultural education to early childhood community. In the last decades, due the increase of non-English speaking immigrant communities and the urge to teach English-speaking children foreign languages, long debates were conducted concerning the introduction of foreign language teaching in American early childhood education. Many other countries followed the Americans and introduced foreign language teaching in their school curricula. (Wardle 2009, 247.)

Contemporary multicultural education has a sociological basis. Educators, similarly to sociologists, think that individual behaviours are influenced by social norms, which provide individuals with physical, psychological, and social skills to exist and grow in a society. (Wardle 2009, 249.) The goal of multicultural education is to improve the relationship of people with different cultural and social backgrounds and help pupils as well as teachers and all members of the school communities to acquire multicultural knowledge and skills in order to learn how to interact in different cultural encounters. Multicultural education helps pupils from different cultural, linguistic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds to experience equity, appreciate diversity, and develop a greater potential for learning. (Banks 2004, 3; 2015, 54.)

Awareness of different languages and cultures and intercultural communication skills are considered essential in basic education in Finland. Because of the lack of awareness of cultural diversity in Finnish schools, the interaction with people with different cultural backgrounds may generate attitudes of discrimination and intolerance towards other cultures. In this regard, multicultural education in Finland plays an essential role in mediating tolerance and acceptance of cultural differences. Multicultural education in Finnish schools challenges stereotyping and prejudices by facilitating the moderation of ethnocentric attitudes and the promotion of equity and justice for all learners regardless of their cultural backgrounds. (Verma 2007, 21.)

In order to understand how to implement multicultural education in American schools, Banks (2004, 4–6; 2015, 55–59) developed five dimensions of multicultural education: *content integration*, *knowledge construction process*, *prejudice reduction*, *equity pedagogy*, and *empowering school culture and social structure*. An effective implementation of multicultural education requires that teachers and other school staff members take into consideration these five dimensions of multicultural education. As for *content integration*, teachers need to use contents from different cultures depending on the pupils' needs and the learning objectives. The *knowledge construction process* is a critical dimension, where teachers and administrators should help pupils acknowledge different cultures and understand how cultural assumptions may influence their attitudes towards people with different cultural backgrounds. In the dimension of *prejudice reduction*, teachers help the pupils develop positive attitudes towards different cultures and experience the recognition of other cultures in the classroom. The dimension of *equity pedagogy* concerns the teachers' pedagogical skills. Teachers need to develop their teaching strategies and improve their teaching methods in order to enable pupils with different cultural backgrounds to experience equal educational opportunities and improve their learning achievement. Teachers may use various teaching approaches and cooperative learning techniques depending on the different needs of the pupils. The fifth dimension of *empowering school culture and social structure* concerns the improvement of the school cultural environment in order to enhance respect and recognition of pupils from diverse cultures among the school community. Teachers must encourage and facilitate interactions with pupils with different cultural backgrounds. Teachers must also reconsider how to integrate in the school activities all the pupils regardless of their cultural backgrounds. (Banks 2004, 4–6; 2015, 55–59.)

These dimensions of multicultural education can also be considered in the implementation of multicultural education in Finnish schools. Banks (1999, 17–20; 2015, 59) argues that the implementation of multicultural education strategy requires a reform in the school. He considers the school as a social system that has to be changed as a whole. A wide range of changes must be made simultaneously in the curriculum and the teaching materials, which must reflect the cultural diversity. The change must also concern the teaching and learning methods, which has to be based on different cultural perspectives and has to be suitable for the needs of all pupils. The changes include also the attitudes, the perceptions, and the behaviours of teachers, administrators, pupils, and all members of a school community, who must have high expectations of all pupils regardless of their cultural

backgrounds. The reform must concern also the goals, the norms, and the cultures of schools. The school cultural environment must value cultural diversity, while the school counselling programs must provide support for pupils with different cultural backgrounds.

Banks' strategy of the school reform is aligned with the UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education (UNESCO 2006, 19), which state that intercultural education does not consist of a simple change in the curriculum, but it involves a major change in all educational processes including school life, student interactions, decision-making, and teacher education and training. Banks (2015, 59) states that often schoolteachers and other school staff members have a narrow understanding of multicultural education. They consider it mainly as a curriculum reform, which needs to be changed and reconstructed in order to meet the needs of diverse groups. Integrating multicultural content into the curriculum is necessary, but it is not sufficient for effective multicultural education. Teachers must be aware of cultural diversity and democratic attitudes and values, and they must adopt comprehensive teaching approaches in order to succeed in the implementation of multicultural education.

In the past decade, there has been a transition in the interpretation of the concept of multicultural education. Educators and researchers prefer to talk about "intercultural" rather than "multicultural" education. Räsänen (2007, 20) argues that the reason we talk about intercultural rather than multicultural education is because, in addition to the recognition of different cultures, there must be collaboration and a mutual dialog between people with different cultures. Kuukka (2009, 181–183) talks about the transition in teachers' education from "multiculturalism" to "interculturalism", which emphasizes intercultural understanding and interaction. She argues that intercultural competence is not only knowledge and skills, but it is also a practice. Räsänen (2007, 26) highlights the idea of universal values as a fundamental constituent of intercultural education. The question is how we can conciliate specific cultural values and general ethical principals in order to enable cooperation between people with different cultures. Our perception of the world must not be limited to our own culture, but we have moral responsibilities towards the recognition of other cultures.

Intercultural learning is not only about inquiring general knowledge of foreign cultures. It is considered as a learning process, where learners gain understanding and sensitivity to culture differences and learn to adapt to different cultural contexts. (Pelkonen 2005, 71.) Intercultural learning is a two way cooperation process, where both parties learn from each other's experiences. Intercultural learning begins as a "situated" learning, where the learner is situated in the margin; then, he/she moves to the centre of intercultural learning once

he/she gains more cultural understanding and communicative skills. (Pelkonen 2005, 84.) Intercultural cooperation is considered as a transformative learning, which requires a radical change in attitudes, beliefs, opinions and emotional reactions. The main challenge of intercultural education is how to raise awareness of cultural diversity and motivation for intercultural learning. The challenge is grater in the context of international cooperation, where intercultural competencies and sensitivity are prerequisites for a successful cooperation. (Pelkonen 2005, 85.) The aim of intercultural education is to learn how to acquire intercultural communication skills.

2.3 *Development of intercultural communication*

In a multicultural society, people with different cultural backgrounds need to communicate and understand each other, although they do not share common cultural experiences. In such a pluralistic society, we may wonder how people may communicate and reach an understanding while being culturally diverse. We may also wish to know how people develop interactive communication skills in order to promote not only tolerance and acceptance of others but also respect and appreciation of diversity. (Bennett 2013, 10.) Bennett (2013, 17) defines intercultural communication as *“a field, which focuses on the communicative interaction between members of different cultural groups”*. People with different cultural backgrounds have different perceptions of reality; therefore, the aim of intercultural communication is to perceive and understand differences and particularities in different cultures and to prevent making assumptions about the common nature of reality. (Bennett 2013, 11.)

At an advanced level of communication, the awareness of cultural differences enables the perception of reality to become more interculturally sensitive. Intercultural sensitivity means *“the ability to discriminate cultural differences and to experience those differences in communication across culture.”* (Bennett 2013, 16.) People become sensitive to cultural differences when they gain the ability to communicate and adapt in different cultural contexts, and they are able to generate different cultural experiences (Bennett 2013, 22–23).

Bennett (2013, 67–69) realizes that people behave in different ways when they interact in a multicultural environment. He developed a model of intercultural sensitivity to describe how people behave in intercultural interactions, and how they become more adaptive to different cultures. People construct reality from their own perspectives, and the more they

perceive reality in a culturally sensitive way, the more they adapt to a different cultural context. Banks outlines six stages for the development of intercultural sensitivity to describe how people experience cultural differences and how they encounter cultural diversity. The stages progress from *ethnocentrism* to *ethnorelativism*. *Ethnocentrism* is a position, where people consider that their own culture is the centre of reality, and where they perceive things from their own cultural viewpoint. On the contrary, *ethnorelativism* is a position, where people realize that their culture is not the only mean to perceive reality, but it is only one organization of reality among many others. In this position, people gain the ability to learn new ways of thinking and interpretation, to recognize and tolerate cultural diversity, and to adapt to different cultures. (Bennett 2013, 67–69.)

In Bennett's model of intercultural sensitivity (2013, 69–74), *ethnocentric* stages include the stages of *denial*, *defense*, and *minimization*. In the *denial* stage, people consider their own culture as the unique reality. They are not able to recognize cultural differences, and they can perceive only general differences. In the *defense* stage, people overestimate their culture and consider it as the only viable culture. They may develop skills to discriminate cultural differences, but their perceptions are dominated by negative stereotypes and assumptions, which underestimate other cultures. In the *minimization* stage, people consider their own cultural worldview as universal. Because they fail to recognize cultural differences, people consider that human beings are similar, and they expect people who come from other cultures to melt in their own cultural world.

Bennett's (2013, 74–78) model progresses from the *ethnocentric* position to the *ethnorelative* position which includes the stages of *acceptance*, *adaptation*, and *integration*. In the *acceptance* stage, people recognize that their own culture exists among many other worldviews. They consider other people who are different from them as equal humans, but they can only recognize general cultural differences. When they reach the *adaptation* stage, people begin to develop culturally appropriate feelings and behaviors in order to adapt to cultural difference. People do not need to substitute their own cultural identity. Instead, they need to extend their beliefs, feelings, and behavior in order to be able to interact in different cultural contexts. In the *integration* stage, people attain the ability to adapt in very different cultural interactions. People in this stage reach a wider intercultural understanding. In addition to their own cultural identity, people have the ability to build a multicultural identity and a multicultural way of thinking. People understand that worldviews are constructed collectively and that identity is constructed on the basis of awareness. (Bennett 2013, 74–78.)

Bennett (2013, 15, 67) defines intercultural competence as “the ability to embody and enact intercultural sensitivity”. Bennett prefers to use the term “adaptation” instead of “competence”. He states that it is fashionable nowadays to talk about “intercultural competence” instead of “intercultural adaptation”. He explains that, in the intercultural field, the term “competence” is often used without any specification of what sense it has, and this may generate confusion in the level of analysis. Intercultural adaptation is the change of behaviour from a certain cultural context to accommodate another cultural context. Intercultural adaptation is the process of expanding one’s beliefs and behaviour by adopting alternative worldviews. In the development of intercultural skills, people learn new perspectives and new ways of interpretations. They understand that their own culture represents only one context of interpretations among other contexts. People who reach cultural sensitivity are interested to move forward to the acquisition of new perspectives and the recognition of other cultures. (Korhonen 2013b, 64–65.)

Jokikokko (2005, 92–97) presents a model of intercultural competence composed of four dimensions: *attitudes, knowledge and awareness, skills, and action*. These abilities are interdependent and constitute the basis for a general foundation of intercultural competence. The dimension of *Attitudes* is about appreciating diversity, being open to other cultures, and willing to promote equity. People begin to develop attitudes towards other people at an early childhood through socialization. These attitudes are refined through learning experiences and the reflection on one’s own cultural awareness. The dimension of *Knowledge and awareness* is the ability to go beyond one’s own cultural background towards understanding how attitudes, beliefs, and values shape peoples’ identities. The reflection on one’s own culture and the awareness of other cultures enable people to explore and experience how to interact in intercultural encounters. *Intercultural skills* are affective social abilities of communication in intercultural encounters, such as how to speak, how to negotiate, and how to tolerate confusion and uncertainty. Intercultural competence is not only skills and attitudes; more importantly, it is a commitment and an *action* to promote equity and justice for all people regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Attitudes, cultural awareness, and intercultural skills are not sufficient for successful intercultural encounters without the willingness to act against inequality, prejudice, discrimination, and racism.

Considering intercultural communication and the attitudes towards cultural diversity in the Finnish society, Finnish people have been often considered ethnocentric. For historical reasons, the dominating unawareness of cultural diversity and stereotyping reflect the

attitude of Finns towards immigrants (Puukari 2013, 89). Cultural barriers in the Finnish society, such as prejudices, fear, and negative emotions, are due to earlier experiences, history, and primary socialization. These emotional barriers are difficult to change; nevertheless, they need to be recognized and discussed. (Räsänen 2005, 19.) People experience insecurity and uncertainty in intercultural encounters when they interpret others' behaviours based on their own culture and expectations. Intercultural conflicts occur when people take their own cultural perceptions for granted. (Kaikkonen 2005, 48–49.) In intercultural conflict situations, people defend their own identity and seek security in their own cultural practices (Talib 2005, 47). Koskensalo (2004, 28) argues that misunderstanding in intercultural communication among the Finnish community is often due to the lack of language skills and the unawareness of cultural diversity. People who are centered on their own culture criticize foreign cultures from their own cultural point of view, and they are disinterested to learn new cultures.

Löytty (2005, 162, 173) states that treating people in a different way is an attitude where the intention is to differentiate between a familiar person and a stranger. In this relationship, strangers are treated as different and inferior. In order to overcome intercultural conflicts, we need to look for differences as well as similarities between cultures. The recognition of cultural differences only does not disclose the similarities, which bind different cultures. Virkama (2010, 43–44) insists on the fact that, when culture is seen as a set of separated patterns that need to be acknowledged, there might be a risk that cultural diversity is considered an obstacle to overcome.

A strong cultural identity is the basis for the development of intercultural communication skills (Koskensalo 2004, 28). In basic education in Finland, there is an emphasis on the awareness of cultural diversity. In the Finnish core curriculum for basic education (2014), it is stated that “[P]eople from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds meet in basic education and get acquainted with diverse manners, communal practices, and beliefs” (Finnish National Board of Education 2014, 16). It is also stated that “[P]upils’ language skills and cultural backgrounds are taken into account in basic education. Each pupil’s language and cultural identity is supported in various ways.” (Finnish National Board of Education 2014, 16.) The national core curriculum for basic education aims to provide a versatile support to every pupil’s language and cultural identity and to guide pupils to recognize, understand, respect, and value everyone’s national language and culture (Finnish National Board of Education 2014, 86). The core curriculum’s principles of raising awareness

of different languages and cultures in basic education imply a reflection on how educators and policy makers can support every pupil's cultural identity.

Cultural identity is a cultural self-awareness. We need to be aware of our own culture in order to understand other cultures. Usually, we assume that we know our own culture because we have been familiar with it for a long time, but this experience may translate into generalization and may lead to stereotyping and wrong assumptions. Cultural identity is a feeling of belonging to a group of people, with whom we share the same values and beliefs. Affiliation can also be with more than one group. Cultural identity is also constructed by ascription to a group, with whom we share nationality, education, status, gender, colour, etc. When affiliation and ascription are matching, they form a strong feeling of cultural identity. Cultural identity is constructed; it does not exist out of our creation, which explains why we may identify ourselves simultaneously to multiple cultures. (Bennett 2013, 49.) Katisko (2015, 189) states that, in welfare services, the interaction between members of a working community who have different cultural backgrounds requires the ability to communicate different cultures to others in order to gain their respect and their trust. The development of intercultural competence requires an understanding of one's own cultural background as well as a natural feeling of belonging to a different cultural working environment.

Language and culture learning is considered the basis for the construction of a pupil's cultural identity and the recognition and the respect of other cultures (Kemppainen & Lasonen 2009, 27; Lasonen, Halonen, Kemppainen & Teräs 2009, 15–16). Kaikkonen (2005, 49) studied the construction of multicultural identity through foreign language teaching. He states that, through the learning of foreign language and culture, we become aware of the specifications of our own language and culture. Foreign language teaching provides intercultural learning, where we learn to construct a wide spectrum of culture. We become aware of the values and the norms of our own culture, and at the same time we have the opportunity to acquire a multicultural identity. Kaikkonen (2005, 50) argues that different language and culture learning cultivates our cultural identity and guides our thinking. The awareness of different languages and cultures cultivates the understanding and the respect of our own culture and other cultures, as well as the tolerance of diversity and intercultural encounters.

Valtonen and Korhonen (2013, 233) consider the guidance of immigrant young pupils at school as an "identity counsel", where in addition to their family cultural identity, immigrant pupils may construct a multicultural identity. The construction of language and culture

identity happens in a cooperative learning environment. Among the different strategies for the integration of immigrants, Suurpää (2005, 62) talks about active tolerance as an act of solidarity built on cooperation, reciprocity, and social ties. Suurpää (2005, 63) states that the tolerance of immigrants is not only acceptance and resilience, but it has to be understood as a cooperative practice, where immigrant pupils participate actively in school activities. The engagement of immigrants as active members in school communities is a prerequisite for the creation of a cooperative learning environment.

3 IMMIGRANTS IN SCHOOL COMMUNITY

The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (2007, 15) uses the concept of “immigrant background” as an overall concept to refer to persons who were born abroad and reside in Finland and whose native language is other than Finnish, Swedish, or Sami. Persons with immigrant backgrounds include also persons born in Finland whose parents were born abroad. Persons with an immigrant background include refugees, asylum-seekers, returning Finns, expatriates, and other foreigners, including workers and students (Family Federation of Finland 2011).

According to the 2014 statistics, the number of people with immigrant backgrounds in Finland was 322 700, of whom 273 300 belong to the first generation and 49 400 to the second generation. (Statistics Finland 2014.) At the end of 2015, there were 329 562 people, whose mother tongue was a foreign language and lived permanently in Finland. They constituted 6 % of the total population. The largest number of immigrants came from Russia, Estonia, Somalia, and Iraq. (Statistics Finland 2016.) Immigrants settled mainly in the big cities, such as Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Vaasa, Turku, and Tampere (Family Federation of Finland 2012).

In the past two decades, the number of immigrant pupils and immigrant teachers has considerably increased in Finnish schools due to international mobility and the rise of the number of immigrants. Consequently, education and integration policies for immigrant pupils and continuing education for immigrant teachers have been part of the basic education reform strategies in Finland.

3.1 *Immigrant pupils*

Native language teaching began in Finland in 1970 for refugee pupils. When the number of immigrant school children continued to rise, the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture decided in 1987 to extend native language teaching to immigrant pupils. Later, in 1992, native language teaching was incorporated for the first time in the Finnish national core curriculum. In 1993, 2870 pupils benefited from native language teaching offered in 35 languages and in 64

municipalities in Finland. Twelve years later, the number of benefiting pupils rose to 10 907 and the number of native languages taught increased to 49 in 74 municipalities. (Ikonen 2007, 41.) Recently, the number of school children with immigrant background has considerably increased, for example, in 2014, there were more than 16 000 pupils who benefited from native language teaching in 53 languages. In 2015, 32 000 pupils (about 6 % out the total number of pupils in basic education) with a native language other than Finnish, Swedish, or Sami, were enrolled in Finnish basic education. In a few schools in large cities, more than half of the school children are immigrants. (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture 2016, 11, 14.)

The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (2016, 12) states that the aim of immigrants' education is to provide immigrant pupils with the necessary skills allowing them to engage as equal members in the Finnish society. Immigrant pupils who live permanently in Finland have the right to the same pre-school and basic education as Finnish children. Immigrant pupils get support to preserve their own native language and their cultural identity. Immigrants' education includes the teaching of preparatory classes, Finnish and Swedish as second languages, immigrants' own native languages, and other religions. In addition, immigrant pupils may get support teaching. (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture 2016, 12.) Schoolteachers play a significant role in the integration of immigrant pupils in Finnish schools and the Finnish society and in the promotion of their well-being and their academic success (Matinheikki-Kokko & Pitkänen 2006, 71).

3.2 Immigrant teachers

According to a report of the Finnish Board of Education (Kumpulainen 2014, 114–115), in 2013, there were 517 immigrant teachers in basic education, who were teaching immigrant pupils. Among these immigrant teachers, 175 of them were teaching preparatory classes, 179 were teaching Finnish as a second language, 14 were teaching Swedish as a second language, 22 were teaching other foreign languages as second languages, 40 were teaching own native languages, and 87 were teaching other religions. In addition, immigrant teachers work in basic education as native-language support teachers and teach foreign languages such as English, Spanish, and Russian languages in Finnish regular classes. Due to the recent increase of the number of immigrant children under school age, the Finnish Ministry of Education and

Culture (2016, 20, 28–29) anticipates that there is a need for more immigrant teachers in basic education and for more resources to support immigrants' education.

The state of well-being at work and the feeling of belonging to work communities have been a major concern of immigrant teachers. Malin and Anis (2013, 141–142) state that social cohesion is one of the concepts of well-being in a society. It is constructed through mutual trust between members of the society and the feeling of belonging to that society. Mutual trust and social cohesion may exist in a society, which promotes equity and social interactions and prevents inequality and marginalization. Malin and Anis (2013, 144) argue that social stigmatization deprives stigmatized people from participating as members of the society and causes their alienation. When stigmatized, people are not accepted in the society; they become marginalized, and they may consider themselves as being inferior to others. Regardless of their qualifications and abilities, immigrants are exposed to social stigmatization especially because of their skin colour, their clothing, and the lack of the host country's language skills. (Malin & Anis 2013, 144.)

Koskinen-Sinisalo (2015, 28) recognizes that the challenges, which immigrant teachers encountered in Finland, are related to the acknowledgement of their professional skills, the availability of work, and bureaucracy. She also realizes that immigrant teachers have difficulties to integrate in a new culture, learn a new language, get acquainted with the school working policies and practices, and become a member of the working community. Koskinen-Sinisalo (2015, 28) states that immigrant teachers face the challenge of gaining a strong professional identity. They are vulnerable to discrimination and marginalization. Arola (2015, 47) asserts that, in addition to professional expertise, the working life requires professional skills such as self-esteem, flexibility, interaction, cooperation, and active participation, which immigrants need to acquire in order to meet the expectations of the Finnish working society.

Latomaa (2010, 209) explains that the difficulties related to native language teaching for immigrant pupils are due to the fact that native language learning is voluntary. Pupils are often neither motivated nor committed to learn their mother tongue, and many of them drop out because they consider native language learning an extra school subject. Native language teaching is organized once a week for two hours. Teaching happens mostly after school day either in the pupil's own school or in another school. Immigrant teachers often work in several schools, and because they need to visit different schools during the day, they are usually not able to participate in staff meetings and other school activities. Therefore, they often remain isolated from the school community.

Virta (2015, 84–85) conducted an empirical research study about native-language support teachers in basic education in the City of Turku. Native-language support teachers represent a new category of immigrant teachers who provide support lessons to immigrant pupils in their own native language. Native-language support teaching is provided to immigrant children whose Finnish or Swedish language skills are not sufficiently strong to be able to study school subjects in Finnish or Swedish language. Native-language support teachers are employed in different cities in Finland, as specific teachers or school assistants, depending whether there are enough immigrant students and allocated resources. Because of the nature of their work, native-language support teachers need to have a continuous cooperation with classroom teachers; however, they feel that they are in a weak position because of their dependency on classroom teachers. The biggest challenge in native-language support teaching is that pupils with different needs and in different school grades are taught in the same class. (Virta 2015, 88.) This is often recognized as a common challenge in native language teaching for immigrant pupils.

Immigrant teachers are recommended to have a degree in higher education and good teaching skills. They are encouraged to acquire teacher's qualifications. According to a report of the Finnish National Board of Education, in 2014, only 65 % of immigrant teachers had teacher's qualifications. 79.4 % of immigrant teachers were qualified teachers in preparatory teaching, while the qualification rate was smaller in the other subjects. The lowest qualification rates were in native language teaching (20 %) and religions (26.4 %). (Kumpulainen 2014, 116.) In 2009, the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture initiated Specima project, a continuing education program for immigrant teachers. Specima education program is an initiative to support the social integration of immigrant teachers. The program is aligned with the Finnish social integration law [L1386/2010] (Finlex 2010), which aims to support and promote the active participation of immigrants in the Finnish society. (Pylkkä 2013, 1.)

From 2009 to 2015, 55 Specima continuing education programs were initiated in several universities and institutes in Finland with a total of 1300 participants (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture 2016, 20). For example, the University of Tampere School of Education initiated in 2009 the immigrant teacher's education program "Kuulumisia", which is part of Specima project. In order to participate in the education program, immigrant teachers are required to have a degree in higher education and acquire the recognition of the compatibility of their degree from the Finnish National Board of Education. Depending on the

need of immigrant teachers, the teacher's education program offers, for example, teacher's pedagogical studies for subject teachers (60 ECTS) and multidisciplinary studies for class teachers (60 ECTS). The aim of immigrant teacher's education program is to provide immigrant teachers with pedagogical teaching qualifications and improve their accessibility to the job market. In addition to pedagogical and multi-disciplinary studies, the program provides also Finnish language teaching and includes teaching trainings. (Pylkkä, 2013, 1; Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture 2016, 20–21; Kuulumisia IV 2016.)

Specima-education program offers immigrant teachers the opportunity to get acquainted with the Finnish education system and the Finnish education and teaching culture. Immigrant teachers learn also multicultural teaching skills and intercultural communication skills. The teaching program is organised through distant learning and intensive in-class sessions. The in-class sessions are based on cooperative learning, where students work together in peer groups. Students have the opportunity to develop cooperative and interactive skills and practice Finnish language. According to some students, who participated in the immigrant teacher's education program, the program helped them strengthen their professional identity and gain self-confidence in fulfilling their teaching duties. (Pylkkä 2013, 2–3.)

The integration of immigrant pupils and teachers in the school community depends on the school environment and the attitudes of the Finnish school community. Even though immigrants are willing to adapt to the school environment, without the cooperation and the motivation of the Finnish school community, the adaptation of immigrants to the school environment cannot be successful. It is stated in the integration policies that the integration of immigrants in the school community facilitates their integration in the host society. When we reflect on the integration of immigrants in the Finnish society, we need to take into account the role of the school as a societal and multicultural institution, which fosters the adaptation of immigrant pupils and teachers in the host society.

4 SCHOOL AS A MULTICULTURAL INSTITUTION

Educational policies provide the main guidelines for the education of immigrants and the promotion of multiculturalism at schools. Nevertheless, schools play a significant role in the development of multicultural education, and furthermore they participate in the development of a multicultural society. Schoolteachers, pupils, and all members of the school communities including the pupils' parents are required to acquire intercultural communication skills and cooperate in order to promote intercultural teaching and learning.

4.1 *School as a societal institution*

The school is considered a societal institution, which fosters societal learning, a positive interdependence, and democratic values. John Dewey (1859-1952) considers school as a model of a small society, which guides the development of open communication, common interests, mutual respect, and shared goals. The school is an environment where pupils, teachers, and all the school communities learn to live together, think, and act democratically. According to Dewey, the school guides the pupils' growth and development of particular skills, attitudes, habits, and dispositions, which have an influence on their thinking, feeling, and acting. In order to achieve this aim, the school must be considered as an integral part of the society. (Simpson & Stack 2010, 163.)

Dewey's theory on education is based on experiential learning. The school is seen as an organic entity, which embodies the life of the social community by bringing out the experiences of pupils, teachers, and all school communities into the school learning environment. Pupils and educators learn to share, question, and reflect instead of simply talk and communicate. According to Dewey, the school is an environment where the school communities learn to respect and appreciate the democratic values, such as respecting others, tolerating differences, appreciating cultural diversity, and working together to find solutions, which create a difference in real-life situations. (Simpson & Stack 2010, 163–164.)

The school, as an integral part of the society, participates in the development of a multicultural society (Virta & Tuittu 2013, 116). In Finland, the school as a societal and educational institution plays an important role in the integration of immigrant children in the Finnish society. In addition to learning Finnish language and culture, Finnish schools offer to immigrant pupils a social environment to interact and build friendly relationship with the Finnish community. Immigrant children adaptation to the school environment is a step forward towards their adaptation in the host society. In order to facilitate the education and the adaptation of immigrant children in the Finnish society, teachers, immigrant and Finnish pupils, parents, as well as the whole school community must be willing to engage in the development of a multicultural school. Cooperation and communality are needed in situations to achieve common objectives, which concern the whole school community. (Talib 2005, 77–78; Tuittu, Klemelä, Rinne & Räsänen 2011, 20, 23.) The development of multicultural skills of the school community is fundamental for a mutual adaptation to cultural diversity and the promotion of multiculturalism.

4.2 Multicultural school community

The development of multicultural skills at schools is important in order to achieve high quality of education and equality . The development of language and cultural awareness is the starting point for multicultural guidance, which aims to increase multicultural thinking and pay attention to pupils with different cultural backgrounds. (Finnish National Board of Education 2011, 7.) In the development of multicultural skills, we must pay attention to the way we support the process of integration and adaptation of immigrants to the school environment (Valtonen & Korhonen 2013, 233). Kemppainen and Lasonen (2009, 27) state that immigrant pupils do not have equal opportunities compared to other pupils due to lack of recognition and esteem. Tolerance, acceptance of diversity, and cultural sensitivity are important in a multicultural school. The integration of immigrant pupils and the acceptance of their differences require from the host community a multicultural awareness and intercultural skills. (Korhonen 2013a, 40–41.)

In a multicultural school environment, teachers, pupils, and the school communities must be aware of their own culture as well as other people's cultures. It is essential to understand that immigrant teachers and pupils may have different ways of thinking, beliefs, and practices, and that they must be understood the way they are. Lasonen et al. (2009, 12)

state that pupils with different cultural backgrounds must be treated at school openly without prejudices. The school community's multicultural skills are the ability to recognize, understand, and appreciate immigrants' cultural practices, values, and beliefs, and to realize the relativity of own perceptions and thinking. Cultural sensitivity in a multicultural school means the ability to understand cultural diversity and to overcome cultural differences. The school community's multicultural skills progress from the recognition and appreciation of cultural differences to the development of a more open and natural attitudes towards one's own culture and foreign cultures, where cultural differences remain unnoticeable. (Bennett 2013, 79, 98; Korhonen 2013b, 63–64.)

Talib (2005, 26) thinks that the promotion of equal education to all pupils requires a reform of the school culture, which requires the change of the collective values, attitudes, beliefs, and practices of individuals and the school community. The development activities may be carried out in cooperation with other schools and immigrants' support services, and also with pupils' parents. Parents are more knowledgeable about their children's education background. They are interested to learn about the Finnish school culture and the education system, and they are concerned about the progress of their children at school. (Finnish National Board of Education 2011, 8; Valtonen & Korhonen 2013, 233.) Teachers' multicultural skills may be developed through cooperation and networking. Teachers are not able to fulfil their teaching duties alone. In a multicultural school, teachers may encounter difficult situations, and they need to have the courage to ask for help from other schoolteachers, who have experience in encountering immigrant pupils. (Talib 2005, 77; Valtonen & Korhonen 2013, 234.)

Virkama (2010, 41–42) talks in her study on intercultural communication about her experience as an intercultural trainer in Finland, when she was invited in 2008 to present a lecture about Islam to people who were participating in a training to become intercultural trainers. She explains that, in this kind of training, the trainer was expected to provide concrete models of how people with different cultural backgrounds interact and to explain how to handle problematic cultural situations. She states that educators are in need to learn how to handle cultural differences in their work. On the other hand, experts and researchers on intercultural communication do not support the idea of ready-made guidelines and tools to facilitate intercultural communication.

Jokikokko (2005, 90) affirms that intercultural competence and sensitivity became essential in a multicultural society. Teachers are required to acquire multicultural skills not

only to manage in problematic cultural situations, but more importantly to be culturally sensitive. Virkama (2010, 50) argues that intercultural competence does not mean to learn different cultural habits and practices in order to know how to interact in different cultural encounters. Intercultural competence is about the awareness of cultural differences and the ability to understand and value cultural diversity and adapt to different cultural contexts.

In 2007, The Finnish National Board of Education initiated a five-year project (called in Finnish “MOKU-ohjelma”) for the development of multicultural skills of school communities in general education. The purpose of this development project was to support the development of multicultural skills of school communities and to promote the cooperation of immigrants and the Finnish community in a multicultural school environment. For the implementation of the development project, development plans were drawn up in different municipalities in Finland depending on the needs of school communities. The development measures were established as an integrated part of the schools daily activities. The purpose of the development project was to respond to the needs of school children, their parents, and the school staff members in order to develop their multicultural skills and to improve multicultural teaching and learning at school. (Immonen-Oikkonen 2010, 6–7.)

The 2010 evaluation report of MOKU development project showed that the development of multicultural skills was considered necessary in school communities. The report stated that teachers’ multicultural expertise has grown, and new policies were developed at schools during the development process. The report stated also that the acknowledgement of pupils with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and the promotion of their adaptation at schools were taken into account. (Lamminmäki & Gustafsson 2010, 14–15.)

The chapter provided background information on immigrant teachers and multicultural education environment and presented the research theoretical concepts. The following Chapter explains the implementation of this research study.

5 RESEARCH IMPLEMENTATION

This Chapter describes and explains the research implementation process. It includes a presentation of the research problem and the research questions and a description of the methods used for research, data collection, and data analysis.

5.1 Research questions

In this research study, the research problem was to find out how immigrant teachers can contribute to the promotion of multicultural education in elementary and lower-secondary schools in Finland. The following research questions were used to solve the research problem:

1. How immigrant teachers can contribute to the promotion of multicultural education at school?
2. What is the adequate environment for immigrant teachers to participate in the promotion of multicultural education at school?

The purpose of this research was to give prominence to the experiences and opinions of immigrant teachers on the recognition of cultural diversity and the promotion of multiculturalism in Finnish schools. The purpose was also to find out how immigrant teachers could be active members in school communities and participate in the promotion of multicultural education at schools in Finland. Immigrant teachers have been the subjects of several research studies, which paid attention mainly to their experiences in Finnish schools and to their perceptions of multiculturalism. The aim of this research was that the answers to the research questions would provide new information on how immigrant teachers could participate as an integral part of school communities to promote multicultural teaching and learning. This work was a qualitative research, whose aim was to answer the research questions within the research theoretical framework and based on previous research studies and the researcher's intuition.

5.2 *Qualitative research*

To explain how to select a research method, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007, 7–8) adopt Burrell and Morgan's (1979) analysis of different assumptions about the way social reality is viewed: ontological, epistemological, and human beings' assumptions. The ontological assumption is about the nature of the study phenomenon and how it relates to social life: is it external to individuals or is it the outcome of individual consciousness? The epistemological assumption is about how to acquire knowledge about a certain phenomenon and how to communicate this knowledge to people. The third assumption is about the nature of human beings and their relation to their environment: are they determined to their environment, to which they respond mechanically? Or are they initiators and producers of their own environment? Quantitative research is about the identification, the measurement, and the analysis of the relationships of certain elements of a study phenomenon. Qualitative research, on the other hand, concerns the understanding of the experiences of individuals and the way they create, modify, and interpret the world where they exist. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007, 7–8.)

The aim of this research is to understand the experiences of immigrant teachers and to reflect on the significance of their contribution to the promotion of multicultural education at schools. Taking into consideration the above-mentioned ontological, epistemological, and human beings' assumptions about the way we view social reality, and how these assumptions employ different qualitative and quantitative research methods, qualitative research method was found more suitable for this research work. Qualitative research focuses on the understanding, the explanation, and the interpretation of the research data. The aim of qualitative research is to understand phenomena the way they exist in human world experience at a certain time and in a certain place. Qualitative research emphasizes the significance and the purpose of a study phenomenon. In qualitative research, emphasis is on the holistic approach of the research data analysis and the interpretation of research results. In this type of research, the aim is not to achieve a statistical generalizability of the research results, but to deliver different perspectives in order to achieve a deeper understanding of a certain phenomenon. (Eksola & Suoranta 1998, 61; Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2009, 161,181; Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 51–52.)

This qualitative research focused on the understanding, the explanation, and the interpretation of immigrant teachers' experiences and opinions on how they could participate

in promoting multicultural education at schools. The aim of this research was to underline the holistic understanding of the experiences and opinions of immigrant teachers and to achieve a greater understanding of the significance of their contribution to promoting multicultural teaching and learning. The author of the this thesis did not intend to seek absolute truth about how immigrant teachers could be active members in school communities, but the aim was to attain a deeper understanding of how immigrant teachers could be cooperative and how they could be integrated as active members in school communities.

Qualitative research is based on previous studies in the research field, the use of theory and empirical data, and the researcher's reflection and reasoning. Qualitative research data is textual, and it may be collected through different methods, such as interviews, biographies, letters, and diaries. Qualitative research is characterized by the use of discretionary or theoretical sampling and a relatively small amount of research data, which is analysed rigorously. In qualitative research, several data analysis methods can be used, such as content analysis and grounded theory analysis. Qualitative research focuses on the explanation and the interpretation of a particular problem rather than prediction and theory testing. In qualitative research, one needs to take into consideration the perspectives of the research participants. The researcher's imagination and subjectivity are major characteristics of qualitative research. (Eksola & Suoranta 1998, 15–21; Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 6–7.)

This qualitative research is an empirical research study, which was based on previous research studies conducted on immigrants in the education field and particularly on immigrant teachers in basic education in Finland. Eighteen immigrant teachers from different cities in Finland provided information for this research study via a questionnaire and group interviews. Data analysis was conducted via content analysis based on the research problem and within the research theoretical framework. The data collection and the data analysis processes are explained in the following sections.

5.3 Research data collection

Prior to data collection, a rigorous plan must be devised where we determine what information we wish to know, how we get this information, and who are the possible subjects to provide such information. In qualitative research, one cannot usually limit the data collection in advance. The data should instead be limited based on the research questions, the

research theoretical framework, and the targeted significance and generalizability of the research. In this type of research, emphasis is on the quality rather than the quantity of data. Data are sufficient when new data do not provide anything new. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 18; Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 47–52.) In this research, the target subjects have received a referral letter (cf. Appendix 1) explaining the context and the requirements of the planned research and a questionnaire (cf. Appendix 2) to be filled prior to the group interviews (cf. Appendix 3).

5.3.1 Group interviews

A group interview is an interview, where several subjects participate at the same time in an interview. In a group interview, participants discuss together about different research themes and provide diverse information on a research topic. Personal opinions are distinguished; in addition, participants may build a holistic understanding of the purpose of the research theme when they interact with each other in a collective conversation. A group interview highlights the participants' diversity of opinions and experiences and their spontaneity. Participants are engaged in a rather natural conversation, where they act as if they were in a normal interactive situation. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 95–97; Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2011, 61; Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 58.)

Cohen et al. (2007, 373–374) explain that group interview is useful when the participants have been working together for some time, or they may have a common purpose, or they are interested to listen to each other's opinions. Group interview may generate a wide range of responses compared to individual interviews. Group interview liberates the interviewer from dominating the interview. The interviewer's task is not to question the interviewees individually, but to conduct and facilitate the conversation between the group members, and to assure that the discussion is focused on the selected themes. The interviewer must also assure that all the participants have the possibility to participate to the conducted conversation. The challenge in a group interview is that there may be participants who tend to dominate the conversation. In such situations, the interviewer needs to interfere in order to activate the other participants, for example by asking them whether they have any comments. The group interview is recorded, and it may be difficult to distinguish the voices of different participants in the transcription phase. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 95–99; Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2011, 61; Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 58–59.)

In this research, the group interviews were conducted in the frame of theme interviews. Theme interview is a half-structured form of interview, which is based on essential themes and progresses forward in a form of a conversation. Theme interview is suitable to study and describe experiences and sensitive issues because it does not include personal questions. It is suitable to be used in cases when the studied phenomenon is not well known and when the research design plan is not clearly defined, but will be clarified within the research process. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 56, 58.) Theme interview does not require that participants share a common experience. The aim of theme interview is to highlight every participant's experience, opinions, beliefs, and feelings while interacting with other participants. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2011, 48, 61.) Theme interview requires that participants are familiar with the study field. Themes are determined based on the research theoretical framework, the related literature, and the researcher's intuition. The selection of theme areas must be rather wide to allow diversity of opinions. Helping questions are used to guide the interview, but they must not lead the conversation. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 56.)

Theme interview was a suitable method to collect information in this research work because the research area was not well investigated. Immigrant teachers did not have a long history of teaching in Finnish schools. Theme interview was a convenient method to underline immigrant teachers' experiences, attitudes, and initiatives concerning their active membership in school communities. In addition to the interviewer, the participants may also contribute in theme interview to sharpen and deepen the theme areas. The participants had the possibility to participate spontaneously in a group conversation and discuss about different themes while interacting with each other. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2011, 48.)

Eighteen immigrant teachers were interviewed. They were participating in a continuing education program for immigrant teachers at a university in southern Finland during the school year 2015–2016. They were selected because, during the education program, they learned about the Finnish education system, the education policies, and the school learning and teaching environment in Finland. They also learned how to fulfil their tasks as educators in a multicultural learning environment. The interviews were planned with the help of the teacher's education program instructor and the program planner. It was agreed with the instructor that the interviews would be part of the in-class teaching sessions at the university.

The immigrant teachers received a referral letter (cf. Appendix 1), prior to the group interviews, where they were informed about the research topic and the purpose of the

research. They were informed that their participation was voluntary. They were also informed that their information would remain confidential and their identity would be kept anonymous along the research process and in the research report. The participants were asked for their consent to record the interviews and use the information in the research work. During the interviews, the subjects were all present at the same time at the in-class teaching session. The topic of the interview was introduced to all of them, then their instructor, who planned to have them working in groups during their in-class session, split them into four groups of four to five students, each. The group interviews were conducted with the same four groups one by one, and lasted from half-an-hour to forty-five minutes. The interviews were conducted in Finnish language because it was the participants' common language of communication.

The participants were originally from nine countries: Spain, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Estonia, Mexico, China, and Senegal/Finland. They represented different schools from twelve cities in Southern, Central, and Eastern Finland. The participants were working mainly as native language teachers, and some of them were teaching foreign languages, such as English and Russian languages. Participants were working mainly in primary and lower-secondary schools, and a few had experience in early childhood, upper-high school, and adult education. Since they were all from the same group in the teacher's education program, the participants knew each other, and they were motivated to participate in the interviews.

During the group interviews, the participants discussed about three main themes (cf. Appendix 3): multiculturalism at school, communality and intercultural encounter at school, and participation in the promotion of multiculturalism at school. Participants were familiar with these themes and provided different opinions and experiences. Narration and story telling were major characteristics of the interviews. The participants illustrated their opinions with examples from their own work experiences and even from their experiences as parents.

The interviews progressed in the form of an open conversation. The participants were interacting with each other, commenting on each other's opinions, completing each other's ideas, and expressing their agreement or disagreement with their peers. The participants were interested to listen to each other and follow the conversation. They were interfering spontaneously in the conversation; as interviewer, the author of the thesis needed to interfere mainly to move from one theme to the next in order to cover all the planned topics. Sometimes, there was a need to explain some questions or add additional detailed questions. The first three interviews lasted about half-an-hour, each, while the forth took forty-five

minutes. The last group interview took a longer time because there were participants who were speaking longer than others, and the interviewer wanted to give a chance to all subjects to participate equally in the conversation. Although the interviews were rather short, they generated a considerable amount of data. The recorded data were transcribed into text format. Since the interviews were conducted in Finnish language, the recorded data were also transcribed in the same language. The citations used in the thesis were translated to English.

5.3.2 Questionnaire

When we plan to organize theme interviews, we usually need to know about the background of the participants. This may be achieved by a half-structured interview in the form of a questionnaire, which contains open questions. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 57.) Open questions are used when we cannot predict the respondents' answers. They do not limit the respondents to particular answers, and they allow free and personal answers. (Cohen et al. 2007, 321–322.) The questionnaire helps to design the frame for theme interview and prepares participants for the group interview (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 57).

Before the interviews, the eighteen teachers received a questionnaire (cf. Appendix 2) in an electronic format through Moodle. The questionnaire contained questions about the students' backgrounds and open questions about the students' experiences and opinions on multicultural education at school, immigrant teachers' integration in school community, and the participation of immigrant teachers in the promotion of multicultural education at school. The questionnaire was piloted before it was sent to the teachers. The interviewer did not see the answers to the questionnaire until after the interviews were completed. Answers to the questionnaire were added to the data collected from the theme interviews, and they were analysed together.

The answers to the questionnaire were brief compared to the information obtained from the theme interviews. In the group interviews, participants provided new information compared to what was provided in their answers to the questionnaire. Interaction of the participants with each other and their motivation to participate actively to the group interviews generated more detailed information compared to what was provided in the answers to the questionnaire. Although the answers to the questionnaire were brief, they were informative and they prepared the students for the group interviews. In the group

interviews, students were acquainted with the interview themes and participated spontaneously and actively in the discussion.

Saaranen-Kauppinen and Puusniekka (2009, 56) note that, in theme interview, the role of the interviewer is to assure that all the themes are covered, but their order of appearance and their scope may change. In this research, the order of appearance of the questions in the questionnaire and interviews were inverted compared to those of the research questions. The research questions were first to find out how immigrant teachers could contribute to the promotion of multicultural education at school, and secondly to find out what was the adequate environment for immigrant teachers to participate to the promotion of multicultural education. In the questionnaire and the interviews, participants were asked first about their experiences and opinions on multiculturalism, then they were asked about the integration in the school community, and finally they were asked about the cooperation and active membership in the school community. This order was followed in the questionnaire and the interviews because it was important first to understand the experiences and opinions of immigrant teachers about multiculturalism and about their adaptation to the school environment; afterward, it was convenient to discuss about their participation as active members in promoting multicultural education at school. The research data collected from the questionnaire and the interviews were analysed via content analysis.

5.4 Research data analysis

Content analysis is a method where the analysis of the fundamental themes may be conducted through the explanation and the interpretation of the answers, which are provided by the data within the research theoretical framework. In content analysis, data are studied multilaterally and in detail, from where significant observations and themes emerge. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 105–106.) In qualitative research, data analysis is more of an interpretation rather than a completely accurate representation of the data. It is a reflection on the participants' interpretations of a certain social encounter. Content analysis was selected in this research because the aim was to understand, describe, and explain the information provided in the data. The purpose of the data content analysis was to discover similarities and differences across the respondents' opinions. The aim was also to possibly generate new themes, which may help answering the research questions and interpreting the data within the research theoretical framework. (Cohen et al. 2007, 368, 461.)

In this research, data analysis was conducted using the following steps of content analysis: 1) creation of the units of analysis, 2) coding, 3) reduction of data, 4) thematizing, 5) typology, and 6) interpretation. The creation of the units of analysis was elaborated by the mean of observations and taking notes in order to discover the main outlines of the studied phenomenon and to distinguish the specifications, the similarities, and the differences in the collected data. The units of analysis were distinguished by ascribing codes to the data. The transcribed data and the answers to the questionnaire were codified using a combination of initials of the participants' home countries and the cities where they live in Finland. Due to its large size, data were reduced to the most important information based on the research questions and the theoretical framework. The remaining data may be used by the author of the thesis in future research studies. (Alasuutari 2011, 40–41; Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 97, 105–106.)

The distinction of the research themes was elaborated through thematizing and typology. Thematizing was conducted by organizing the reduced data in unified sets of information. The items, which appeared across the participants, were grouped together in order to search for similarities and differences and compare the issues that each participant has raised. The unified items were described in short summaries, grouped into related themes, and assembled in a tabular form. Typology was used to compress the themes into different types according to the information contained in the data. Typology helped to find out what were the fundamental and relevant information to the research problem. The analysis of the fundamental themes was conducted through the explanation and the interpretation of the reduced data based on the theory, the related literature, and the researcher's intuition. The research results were compared with previous studies in the research field. The research data analysis progressed from particular perceptions of the participants to general statements and focused on the holistic aspect of the information provided by the participants. (Alasuutari 2011, 38–46; Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 105–106, 108.)

The aim of this research was to answer the research questions based on the information provided by the immigrant teachers within the research theoretical framework. The purpose of this research work was to elevate the immigrant teachers' individual opinions and assertions to a higher level of perception, leading to a potential holistic understanding of the research problem, which may confirm the significance and the reliability of the research results.

6 RESEARCH RESULTS

The research results, generated from the research data analysis, are presented in this thesis in three main themes: 1) Cooperation and active participation in the school community, 2) Recognition and appreciation of multiculturalism at school, and 3) Integration in the school community. In the analysis of the first theme, data were analysed to address the first research question about how immigrant teachers could contribute to the promotion of multicultural education at school. The analysis of the first theme revealed the participants' understanding of multicultural education and how they participated in its promotion. In addition, the analysis brought about the challenges, which the participants encountered in their workplaces regarding their participation as active members of school communities.

In the analysis of the second and the third themes, data were analysed to address the second research question, which was to find out what was the adequate environment for immigrant teachers to contribute to the promotion of multicultural education at school. The analysis of the second theme revealed the opinions of the participants on the acknowledgment of multiculturalism and the appreciation of cultural diversity at school; whereas, the analysis of the third theme brought out the experiences and the opinions of the participants regarding their integration in the school community. In this report of the research analysis, the citations are presented in italics. The omitted text from the citations is marked with ellipsis dots [...]. Interview participants are represented with the symbols P1 to P18; for example P1 represents participant number 1.

6.1 Cooperation and active participation in school community

The participants discussed their cooperation and their active participation in the school community. They revealed the obstacles that were preventing them from being active members, and they proposed possible solutions, which would enable them to contribute to the promotion of multicultural education. In order to discuss how to promote multicultural education, the participants reflected first on the significance of multicultural education. The

participants think that multicultural education is about raising awareness of cultural diversity among the school community:

... one that respects cultural differences, [and] recognises gaps kids can have in their education and their knowledge due to different backgrounds. (P9)

The participants agree that teachers must take into consideration the pupils' own cultural background because the latter has a strong impact on a child's learning ability. Children learn and perform at school in different ways depending on their cultural backgrounds. However, the participants think that the aim of multicultural education goes beyond the acknowledgement of cultural differences to promoting respect and appreciation of cultural diversity. Awareness of cultural diversity is the ability to understand cultural differences and to build an understanding of a multicultural society:

One must take into account the difference between pupils related to their backgrounds and teach Finnish pupils to respect, to learn from, and to value different cultures in Finland today. (P4)

The participants think that multicultural education must not only be oriented towards facilitating the adaptation of immigrant pupils to the culture of the host society, but it must also help all pupils to enrich their own culture and construct a wider understanding of different cultures, regardless of their cultural backgrounds. The participants consider that multicultural education requires primarily a self-awareness of cultural differences and the willingness and the motivation to learn new cultures in order to develop cultural sensitivity and learn how to interact in different cultural contexts:

One must be oneself interested in different cultures, traditions, worldviews, etc. One has to be open-minded and ready to deal with issues, which are new and challenging to oneself. One can be an example to inspire others... (P14)

Due to the increase in the number of immigrant pupils in the past decade, awareness of cultural diversity became necessary in Finnish educational institutions. Koskensalo (2004, 28) affirms that, in school classes, in addition to learning about foreign cultures, pupils learn how to face possible misunderstanding of cultural differences from the perspective of their own cultures. Nowadays, the need for cultural awareness remains considerable. Koskinen-Sinisalo (2015, 178–179) states that, in multicultural education, teachers are required to be

aware of the needs of immigrant pupils depending on their cultural backgrounds. Pupils learn to recognize and respect cultural diversity and learn how to encounter different cultures.

The goal of multicultural education is not simply the recognition and the appreciation of different cultures, but cultural diversity must be integrated in school curricula and teaching and learning pedagogies (Verma 2007, 24). The Participants insist on the fact that multicultural education is primarily a change in the teaching practices. Multicultural education as defined by one participant is:

... one that brings more to the classroom and not one that starts restricting Finnish tradition to keep newcomers happy, but rather includes their traditions side by side with Finnish ones. (P9)

The promotion of multicultural education is a shared task between all members of a school community. The desire and the willingness of the participants to be active members of the school community in their workplaces were noticeable:

It is ... everyone's desire to build a better learning environment because I am also there, I am its user, its agent, its producer; I have had many roles. (P17)

However, the participants admitted that there were many barriers, which hindered their active participation in the school community and their cooperation with other school staff members:

... I have many ideas how I may be active, but the rector is always in a hurry and teachers have a lot of work ... I have a lot of ideas, but I don't know how they can be realized. (P2)

The participants agree that active membership requires the teacher's own initiative to be an active member and to take part as any other teacher:

... I have been involved in all kind of projects ... my experience is that if you do not show up, no one invites you because it's something that exists, and it is clear ... that's working culture ... it must be one's own initiative. (P16)

It would be very important to participate specifically to what everyone else is doing because, even if one is from a different culture and a different country, in my opinion, he/she doesn't need to be a delegate of multiculturalism, as it specifically determines our position. If one does everything that others are doing, then he/she also integrates easier to the school community, so that he/she is not too different. (P10)

Raising awareness of cultural diversity happens in authentic interactive activities, for example during school lessons. The participants think that it is important to attract the pupils'

attention on cultural diversity and to raise their curiosity to explore different cultures. Pupils can learn about different cultures during the lessons, such as how holidays are celebrated differently in other countries, and they can question and understand cultural differences in interactive learning situations:

... in my opinion, it happens naturally because, for example yesterday we had a class and there we talked about Finland because the topic of the lesson was about Finland, and we talked about Father Christmas, and I said that in Hungary we have Jesus baby who brings the gifts on Christmas, and we have Father Christmas who comes on the sixth of December. It is really a natural situation, and they ask and I answer. (P3)

... by telling maybe a little about own country and culture, for instance, when it's Christmas, for example, we can tell about what we do in Spain during Christmas ... When it's the National Day, maybe we can talk about when is National Day and why and what do we do, how do we celebrate it. (P1)

In addition to cultural classroom activities, school parties and cultural events are good opportunities to introduce different cultures, such as Christmas parties, International Day, and Foreign Language Day, where there can be music and presentations in different languages. Immigrant teachers participate in organizing language clubs and school exchange programs with twin schools abroad to enhance cross-cultural learning:

In my case, I'm a foreigner, so I take care of all things related to internationalization. In spring, we had International Day, and I organized it with another teacher ... and I organized also an English language club and a Hungarian language club. (P3)

... many classes came to a same place, and I told about my own country, and I taught some songs in my own language, and something positive about own country and culture. Then, we had a twin school class in Estonia, so they came to our school, and I was with them all the time. (P4)

... we organized a project, a school exchange with Milano, ... It's been the third year that Italian students come to Finland and Finnish students go to Italy ... and I have been there with them when they came to Finland ... It was in my opinion a very nice project. (P7)

Many Russian language teachers developed foreign projects at schools, for example between Finnish and Russian schools, and then teachers can be mediators between Finnish and Russian schools... The projects were very well developed. (P12)

Cooperation with schoolteachers and other school staff members is necessary to facilitate the communication with the pupils' parents, especially when parents do not speak Finnish. Talib (2005, 55) states that the interaction between teachers, pupils, and parents helps to tolerate

differences. Virta (2015, 90–91) argues that immigrant teachers have an essential role in cooperating with the parents of immigrant pupils. Due to the lack of language skills, parents have difficulties to communicate with teachers and other members of the school community. The parents of immigrant pupils are reluctant about the participation of their children to support lessons because they believe this may increase discrimination and underestimation of their children. Immigrant teachers can cooperate in these situations to clarify misunderstanding or conflicting situations between parents and the school staff members:

It's a must to have cooperation especially in primary school ... Every pupil has his/her own class teacher, and especially with those class teachers we have cooperation, but not all the time. Most of the time, the class teachers are fully responsible because they teach all the subjects, and subject teachers take the responsibility, for example to contact the parents through Wilma, by telephone, or in another way. (P18)

... if there's a foreign teacher who speaks a certain language, which the pupil's parents do not speak, for instance Finnish, he/she can work as a translator... (P9)

Valtonen and Korhonen (2013, 233–234) state that the school does not always succeed to reach the parents of immigrant pupils due to the language barrier. The school boards provide school guides in different languages; however, immigrant parents are not usually accustomed to reading documents in Finnish language. It would be better for them to participate in information meetings and parents' evenings. The interaction of teachers with parents happens traditionally during parents' evenings at schools. Usually, class teachers organize such events to keep parents informed about how things are going at school and to discuss school current issues. Although immigrant teachers are not required to organize parents' evenings, it is important to arrange such event:

When my daughter was at school, The Russian language teacher organized for us, the parents, meetings and events, where he/she told us how to preserve the use of mother tongue at home, and what is its significance, and how to practice Finnish language and own native language at the same time. It is very important for the parents. (P12)

Immigrant teachers are motivated and willing to be fully engaged similar to regular schoolteachers in order to facilitate pupils' learning and promote multiculturalism; however, they encounter many obstacles, which prevent them from being active members. Koskinen-Sinisalo (2015, 27) states that one of the major problems of immigrant teachers is that they work mainly as part-time teachers, and they need to move from one school to another;

therefore, they do not have a chance to meet other teachers and school staff members. The participants experienced similar problematic situations as part-time teachers:

... In fact, I'm there when most of the people are away. As a native language teacher, teaching hours are always out of the school regular teaching schedule or generally. (P16)

... the problem is that, at the moment, I'm an hourly teacher, so I'm not able to organize any student exchange programs because they will happen next year, and I don't know if I will be there in the fall or not, and how this will happen. (P3)

Klemelä et al. (2011, 227–228) found out in a research project on immigrant teachers that even immigrant teachers who had a well-established job at school and who were satisfied with their work felt that they were isolated compared to other schoolteachers. Klemelä et al. explained that the lack of contact opportunities was mainly due to the fact that immigrant teachers were moving between schools. Since the participants are not present on a regular basis at schools, they do not frequently take part in school events and training programs; however, they realize that they are a good opportunity to meet people and get acquainted with their culture:

All those school events, teacher's training programs, and pre-Christmas parties, they are very important. Then, one can really meet people in a better way and somehow from a different side ... if we meet in the copying room or somewhere else with a cup of coffee in hand, it's over in a short time ... but when we meet for the first time in pre-Christmas party, it's a different relationship. After that, the following time when we meet ordinarily, it seems to be more familiar to me. (P8)

Another challenge, which discourages immigrant teachers to be active at school, is that immigrant pupils are not usually interested to talk about their cultural backgrounds. Immigrant pupils often refuse to be looked at as foreigners; they want to behave like Finnish pupils and refuse to speak their mother tongue outside of the native language lessons. This denial of immigrant pupils of their own language and culture discourages their native language teachers to be involved in any multicultural events at schools:

If I would like to organize a Russian language day for example at school, and I know that there are many Russian pupils at school, it doesn't work because pupils want to adapt so strongly that they do not want to be noticed for being Russians during the school day; so, they use their mother tongue during the lessons, but if I speak to them Russian in the school corridor, they don't want to talk to me. (P2)

Regardless of the immigrant pupils' tendency to deny their own language and culture, there have been positive attitudes of immigrant pupils who were motivated to talk about their home countries:

In my opinion, in a Finnish class, children who are not Finns have to be encouraged to be proud of who they are ... Many children came to me saying: "See, we have in Estonia a summer cottage", or that "I speak Estonian", or that "I have my mother (or my father) Estonian". They were brave, and I tried [to encourage them] to speak bravely Estonian. Even Russian children came to me, since I speak Russian language a little, and they told me: " Yes, me too, I speak Russian" ... They were proud of who they are. Of course, they want to be similar to all the others; however, children must know about their own origin and must be proud of it. (P4)

Immigrant teachers have a strong impact on strengthening immigrant pupils' cultural identity and promoting their awareness of cultural diversity. The participants agree that immigrant pupils must be encouraged to speak their native language, to value their identity and their culture, and to be proud of who they are. Kaikkonen (2005, 50) argues that, in a multicultural environment, we meet people with different cultures, beliefs, values, manners, and practices. In order to promote our own and other people's adaptation to a multicultural environment, we must be aware of our own cultural identity and recognize other cultures.

Immigrant teachers can participate effectively in the promotion of immigrant pupils' well-being. Immigrant pupils who have problems at school may open up more to immigrant teachers, and they may feel more comfortable to talk to them about their problems rather than talking to Finnish teachers:

I have noticed that everyone knows that I'm a foreigner, even the children know, and if we talk for example about bullying, if the bullied child is a foreigner, he/she opens up to me easier; so, I thought that it might be useful also for the children that there would at school a teacher who is not a Finn. (P3)

Koskinen-Sinisalo (2015, 170) insists on the importance of the role of immigrant teachers at school. She states that, in addition to teaching duties, immigrant teachers cooperate with the pupils' parents and other parties, and they help clarify problematic situations related to pupils' behaviors. Virta (2015, 88) affirms the commitment and the desire of immigrant teachers to help their pupils. Immigrant teachers may share the same cultural background with their pupils, and they have the ability to identify their special needs and to help them overcome their problems regarding their well-being and their integration at school.

Due to the increase in the number of immigrant pupils with different cultural backgrounds, Finnish teachers need guidance and support to learn how to manage in different cultural encounters. Talib (2005, 65) states that Finnish schoolteachers are often not acquainted with different cultures, and they may not be aware of the needs of pupils with different cultural backgrounds. She insists that there must be teachers who represent different cultures and who have experiences with immigrant pupils. The participants suggest also the same idea. Immigrant teachers who are regularly available at school can help Finnish teachers and other school staff members to deal with issues related to immigrant pupils:

The idea is that some teacher starts to teach multiculturalism ... and he/she can be really a multicultural person of the workplace, who brings difference to the workplace. It's not a bad idea in that sense; then, something beneficial can generate out of it if no one else have done it so far in that workplace. (P10)

Koskinen-Sinisalo (2015, 35, 178–179) realized in her study that immigrant teachers gained multicultural competences through their teaching experiences. They had a wide understanding of cultural diversity, and they also had the ability to deal with immigrant pupils. She argues that immigrant teachers should be able to mediate their culture. Teachers with different cultural backgrounds have special skills, which are needed for the education of pupils with diverse cultural background and the communication with their parents. Similarly, the participants demand that immigrant teachers be fully engaged as active members of the school community the same way as their Finnish colleagues. The participants think that the regular presence of immigrant teachers at schools and their active engagement as staff members offer school children a better image of the Finnish multicultural society:

In my opinion, it is very important also that we see in the teachers' community multicultural people because there have been too many foreigners as assistants ... It is a great policy to integrate [people from] other countries especially to the teachers' community because otherwise pupils get a wrong image on the society. The school is a kind of a small society, which must reflect what is happening in reality. Only Finns teaching [at school] is a biased image in my opinion. (P10)

Lefever, Paavola, Berman, Guðjónsdóttir, Talib and Gísladóttir (2014, 80) conducted a comparative research study on how immigrant teachers succeeded in Finland and Iceland and what challenges they faced in their work. They found out that immigrant teachers contributed positively to their workplaces. They were interested to develop their skills and even willing to

hold leadership positions. Similar convictions were also expressed in this research. The participants believe that immigrant teachers must participate in decision-making and must be entrusted full responsibility to fulfil their duties as schoolteachers. Immigrant teachers have had positive teaching experiences not only with immigrant pupils, but also with Finnish pupils, since they were teaching them foreign languages as second languages such as Spanish, English, and Russian. Participants believe in their professional abilities to teach not only native languages but also other school subjects:

It's true that not only languages a foreigner can teach, not necessarily; he/she can teach any subject. (P11)

In my opinion, it helps very much that one can introduce his/her own culture and language ... Almost in all study subjects we can teach about different countries and different cultures, it's not anymore that every teacher works on his/her own subject without knowing what another teacher is doing. Teachers may do a kind of big project, which includes all the subjects ... and if we think about culture, music can be from different countries, and art from different countries, and also sports and dances from different countries, and also games. In my opinion, it became now easy, if one is just willing to plan such projects. (P10)

Virta (2015, 85) mentions in her study that, in addition to teaching duties, native-language support teachers provide also support teaching to immigrant pupils in preparatory classes. They participate in the assessment of immigrant pupils' learning abilities, and they help them adapt to the school environment. Support teachers work also as mediators between teachers, social curators, schools nurses and psychologists, and the parents of immigrant pupils.

Koskinen-Sinisalo (2015, 214) suggests that one of the procedures to benefit from immigrant teachers' professional skills and multicultural competences is to organize common teaching in heterogeneous classes, where both a Finnish teacher and an immigrant teacher cooperate during the same lesson to respond to the needs of all pupils. As a consequence, immigrant teachers have a chance to learn the Finnish school culture, to practice Finnish language, and to help raising awareness of cultural diversity. Such a common teaching procedure must not require from immigrant teachers a good command of Finnish language; instead, it should focus on their pedagogical skills.

The suggested approach of Koskinen-Sinisalo to have heterogeneous classes, where both Finnish and immigrant teachers are cooperating in a same lesson, is partially practiced in some schools in Finland, which provide native-language support teaching (cf. Section 3.2, 22). Virta (2015, 88) explains that normally native-language support teaching is arranged

separately in small groups out of classroom teaching hours, but, sometimes, teaching may be organized in regular classroom lessons, where the immigrant teacher is tutoring immigrant pupils while the Finnish teacher is teaching the other pupils. Immigrant teachers follow in their teaching the classroom teacher's instructions based on the school curriculum and the subject-specific syllabus.

Although many educators agree that immigrant teachers can cooperate with Finnish teachers to provide multicultural teaching, Virta (2015, 89) argues that native-language support teachers need to acquire subject-specific teaching skills. They are asked to teach different school subjects, but they do not have the necessary qualifications to help the students in all school subjects, such as in mathematics, chemistry, and physics. Translating studied subjects in the pupils' native language is not sufficient to help them understand the subjects. Virta (2015, 89) mentions that immigrant teachers want to acquire teacher's qualifications to be able to work as class teachers or subject teachers.

Immigrant teachers are willing to be part of the school community and to participate in the development and the promotion of multicultural teaching and learning. In order to find out how the participation of immigrant teachers in the promotion of multicultural education can be facilitated and encouraged at school, the participants discussed and reflected on the recognition of multiculturalism and the appreciation of cultural diversity in their workplaces.

6.2 Recognition and appreciation of multiculturalism at school

In the discussion regarding the recognition and the appreciation of multiculturalism, the participants raised critical issues about multicultural skills, concerning in particular the respect of cultural diversity, cultural sensitivity, and the adaptation to different cultures. The participants had different opinions on the recognition of multiculturalism in Finnish schools. Multiculturalism was recognized in some schools, but not in others, or that the recognition was not sufficiently transparent. Different criteria were used to evaluate the recognition of multiculturalism: the number of immigrant pupils at schools, the type of foreign languages taught and how teaching is organized, the attitudes of the school staff members, and the existence of cultural events and cultural exchange programs.

Multiculturalism was recognized in schools, which had many immigrant children, especially in large cities, such as in Helsinki and Tampere. Nevertheless, even small cities in

southern Finland were known for being multicultural. Multiculturalism was also noticeable in schools where native languages teaching was integrated in the school teaching program:

We have many immigrant pupils, and it is visible also in the classes, and many pupils come, and they do not necessarily speak Finnish ... (P3)

... My school is very multicultural, just a normal Finnish public school, but at school we teach Finnish, Swedish, German, Chinese, and English language of course; and multiculturalism is visible because, in our school, there is especially this Finnish-Chinese bilingual teaching ... Asian culture is visible ... if you hear someone speaking Chinese, it's just a normal thing ... (P16)

However, multiculturalism was not noticeable in schools with very few immigrant pupils and in schools, where immigrant teachers were teaching foreign languages, such as English and Spanish, to mainly Finnish pupils. Multiculturalism was not sufficiently visible even in schools, where there were immigrant pupils and teachers:

... I teach language courses, and almost all the students are Finnish ... From the teachers' side, multiculturalism is a little visible, I'm myself a foreigner, and before me, there was a Colombian teacher, and there's a teacher who is a Finn but half Italian ... Multiculturalism is visible a little, and after all, when ... [it] is a small city, in my opinion, it is not important. (P1)

... There isn't a lot of multiculturalism because I teach Russian as a second language and in the class there are Finnish children, there aren't any Russian children, sometimes one or two... In Steiner school, where I teach English, there are only Finnish children. Unfortunately, in my case, there isn't a multicultural teacher; I'm alone. Sometimes, I meet another teacher from another country. (P2)

In the place where I am, it's also the same, very few immigrant children, all of them are Finns, and we don't have any person, whom I meet, who is has a nationality other than Finnish. I've been the only foreigner in all the schools where I've been. (P4)

I can't say how we take multiculturalism into account. At least in my workplace, there isn't a lot of multiculturalism (P13)

The acknowledgment of multiculturalism depends on how much people are aware of cultural diversity and how much they are willing to adapt to different cultures. Participants noticed that the attitudes of the Finnish members of school communities towards the acceptance and the appreciation of cultural diversity were ambivalent, as shown in the conversation below:

- P1: *We say that we accept and appreciate [multiculturalism], but maybe the reality is that things change from one city to another, maybe.*
- P2: *I agree because I live in a small city, and at school we say that we appreciate [multiculturalism], but if one is a foreign teacher, for example me, it's difficult to get a job as an English language teacher because there are many Finns who teach English, and it is a valuable and a good job.*
- P3: *The situation is the same, I'm the only foreign teacher at school and I have had a few problems.*

The participants noticed that there has been an improvement in terms of acceptance of cultural diversity at school. Attitudes towards immigrants have improved; nevertheless, they remained partially negative:

Yes ... [multiculturalism] is appreciated ... The attitudes have changed. It started in our school sometimes ten years ago. Now people are somehow more tolerant, I would say. (P6)

Well, it depends on the school, but now, it seems that, when I moved twenty-four years ago, at that time attitudes were not as good as five years ago. But, now when asylum-seeks came, it seems that part of the people are totally against, and part of them are favourable. It seems that Finns are divided on how they must deal with the situation; previously this didn't exist. (P5)

Raunio et al. (2011, 20) state that the challenges in interactive situations generate mainly when people who grew in different cultural environments and who have different values and manners are not aware of each other's values and communication habits. Lasonen et al. (2009, 15–16) argue that the unawareness of others' different cultures is due to the fact that we consider our own values, practices, and actions as a universal reality. They insist on the fact that it is important to recognize cultural difference in order to avoid inequality. The recognition of cultural difference is based on the acceptance of others' cultural values and specificities.

Bennett (2013, 78) explains that denial attitude of cultural diversity is not a refusal to confront cultural differences. It is rather the inability to perceive cultural distinctions. So by raising awareness about cultural diversity, people may not totally refuse to recognize cultural differences. The defense attitude may be resolved by recognizing that people are all equally human and by avoiding the polarity of "us" and "them". The minimization of cultural diversity can be resolved by cultural self-awareness in contrast to other cultures. People need to be

aware that their beliefs, attitudes and values are conditioned by a certain social context, and that they cannot be universal.

The participants believe that the recognition of multiculturalism at school depends on the school staff members whether they are interested to learn about different cultures. There was in the discussion a special emphasis on the role of school rectors in the recognition of multiculturalism:

It depends so much on the place, on the school, and maybe first of all on the rector, what kind of person the rector is. Only if the rector is somehow interested, then [multiculturalism] is noticed and practiced; if not, there's a kind of wall. (P14)

At least, in the teachers' room, somehow things come up in the conversations: "How is it in your country?" And "How are things done?" So, we compare experiences, and we tell about how we celebrate for example something ... (P5)

... I went to visit a school ... and there, on the door, it was written, "Welcome" in different languages. It was just a single thing, but, in my opinion, it showed that, there, the schoolteachers were interested to do something, because in the place, where I have had the training, there wasn't anything. (P14)

In intercultural encounters, cultural awareness is necessary to avoid wrong assumptions and stereotyping. The participants agree that they represent their own countries and cultures at schools; however, they oppose to stereotypes and wrong assumptions about immigrants' cultural backgrounds. Immigrants do not necessarily know everything about their home culture or practice such culture. Cultural habits and practices may vary in a certain country, depending on what part of a country one comes from. Immigrants do not necessarily preserve the cultural habits and customs of their home country. These wrong assumptions must be brought out at schools to raise cultural awareness among the school community:

In my opinion, it is assumed for sure that if a teacher comes from a different culture, he/she is in a way an expert of a different culture, although, in reality, he/she is not. We assume right away that if one is a foreign person, he/she knows all about all cultures... (P10)

... There are some kind of stereotypes that if you are originally from a certain place, you like certain things or do certain things, but things are not like that, and it is good to go to school and show to the children that it is not necessarily like that. Even though [I'm] from Spain, I don't know how to dance flamenco, I don't drink alcohol, or take a "siesta". It would be nice if those issues were not so generalised, but they still exist, maybe this multiculturalism is starting to break these issues. (P11)

In my opinion, the language is for sure the most important thing, we are experts of our own native language ... I don't have any other thoughts ... but that language, which we teach at school. (P11)

Korhonen (2013b, 60) states that, when encountering people with different cultural backgrounds, stereotypes, which may create problematic communicative behaviors, often indicate the misunderstanding of the other side. Assumptions and stereotypes must be recognized in order to avoid them. Awareness of cultural diversity and cultural sensitivity may reduce stereotypes and prejudices. Verma (2007, 26) argues that teachers must be aware of cultural diversity in their society. They must be able to identify their prejudices and the discrimination against the others in their workplace. They should be willing to change and adapt to different cultures.

Immigrant teachers believe that multiculturalism is not only about talking about one's own culture to the school community. It's about reaching a mutual understanding of different cultures and having the ability to adapt to them:

... When you bring a ready package, no one says no, but that's not multiculturalism, it 's something exotic ... I bring today something exotic to your school, it's convenient to all, and it starts and ends there, it's a "pop-up" multiculturalism. (P17)

In education, intercultural communication is a dynamic interaction between members of the school community, which requires, in addition to interactive skills, learning and understanding different cultures. There must be a dialog in the school community, to find out how differences may be recognized (Lasonen et al. 2009, 11). Participants believe that the acceptance of cultural diversity requires a continuous dialog between all members of the school community. The participants are willing to talk about their culture in different school occasions, provided that there is a mutual dialog and that all school members are willing to learn from each other. Interaction and mutual dialog may reduce misunderstanding and wrong assumptions and help construct a mutual understanding of cultural differences:

... I think that multiculturalism the more we talk about it the more it is accepted. (P4)

... I would say that, at the beginning, people are enthusiastic, but ordinarily different cultural encounters may appear, and a lot of misunderstanding may occur. However, when we learn to acknowledge and there's an open atmosphere, at that time, we can discuss things. So, if there's a dialog, there's also an understanding. (10)

Räsänen (2005, 21) states that dialog and interaction with communities with different cultural backgrounds may help develop a mutual understanding and find creative ways to overcome intercultural barriers. Kuukka (2009, 242–244) talks in her doctoral research about critical and respectful reciprocity as a major dimension of multiculturalism. She affirms that the promotion of multiculturalism must be based on a mutual understanding and cooperation between Finnish and immigrant educators. Facing multiculturalism is the responsibility of the whole school working community. Intercultural skills are not individual skills, but a collective ability required for the whole community. (Virta & Tuittu 2013, 124.)

Based on the participants' experiences, multiculturalism was promoted at school in different school events such as school parties, cultural events, and art galleries (cf. Section 6.1, 40). Tuittu et al. (2011, 23–24) state that the school secures for immigrant children a safe and quality learning and growing environment, where their cultural backgrounds are taken into consideration. They assert that immigrant pupils' cultural backgrounds must be taken into consideration not only in the Finnish core curriculum, but also in teaching procedures and different school activities, such as pupil welfare committees, school clubs, and school parties.

The participants mentioned that, during school parties and cultural events, immigrant pupils organized cultural presentations and concerts in their own native languages and presented their native languages and cultures in art galleries. Cultural exchange programs with twin schools abroad were a good opportunity to promote multiculturalism. Multicultural learning activities were also integrated individually in classroom teaching:

In Tampere, there have been all kind of happenings, and they exist in almost all the schools in certain ways ... Pupils made all kind of presentations in their own languages, and others told about their own countries, for example about nature or people ...and about culture and other things. Some pupils made all kind of drawings, and they hung them on the wall, then all the others went to see them and read them, and there were next to them short notices in Finnish language. (P6)

... In the preparatory class, in the party, there were the school orchestra and other presentations of the preparatory class from Middle-East countries and from Asian countries. They had a small singing show, and there were few pupils performing and singing on their own languages ... (P8)

I remember we had at school ... a Christmas party, and they sang all a Christmas song in different languages, in Spanish, English, and Finnish, and it was fun ... (P7)

In the children's school, there was Comenius project, and there was a teacher exchange from different countries; then, we listened to music from different countries, which were represented there ... (P5)

... Mostly, it's maybe limited to what teachers include in their teaching plans during the lessons. Occasionally pupils have also some work, which is about differences and multiculturalism. (P10)

The participants think that the emphasis on the acknowledgement of cultural diversity and the promotion of multiculturalism in the national core curriculum for basic education (cf. Section 2.3, 16–17) is a good initiative to enhance cross-cultural learning and empower immigrant teachers:

Yes, it's a nice thing that multiculturalism is taken into account in the core curriculum ... It's a very important thing nowadays. Foreigners are already many in Finland, and there will be more arriving. So, above all, it's a positive thing. (P11)

I hope to have more possibilities to do something new, now that it is legalized ... (P3)

... When multiculturalism and other cultures and countries are joined to the core curriculum, to me, it means a deeper acknowledgement. (P8)

Participants hope that the acknowledgement of cultural diversity in the core curriculum will not remain on paper, and will be implemented in practical procedures; however, they believe that this would be difficult to realize:

A good idea; it may remain though just as an idea. (P15)

Well, it's a good idea, but, in my opinion, it's difficult to adapt to everyday activities. Maybe since people are always in a hurry, and there are always a lot of things to do, maybe it's difficult. (P1)

It's a nice thing ... but, in principle, even now it is possible to teach new languages at school, but the resources and the lack of money how to realize it, this is often a question of money and also cooperation. (P16)

Awareness of cultural diversity and the recognition and the appreciation of multiculturalism help develop a favourable multicultural school environment and encourage immigrant teachers to participate as active members in the promotion of multicultural education. In addition, in order to find out how immigrant teachers can become an integral part of the school communities, the participants discussed the adaptation to the school environment and the integration in the school communities.

6.3 Integration in school community

Immigrant teachers expressed their motivation and willingness to be part of the school communities and participate, along with their Finnish colleagues, in enhancing multicultural learning and promoting multiculturalism. They revealed the constraints, which hindered their active participation, and they suggested possible solutions to improve the situation and facilitate their contribution similar to other school staff members to promoting multicultural teaching and learning (cf. 6.1, 39–45). In addition to raising awareness of cultural diversity to enhance the development of a multicultural school environment, the participants believe that they need to be fully integrated in school communities. Koskinen-Sinisalo (2015, 109) found out in her study that immigrant teachers had difficulties to deal with Finnish school staff members who were considered to be introverted and not sociable. The participants have had similar experiences, but they managed to adapt easily to the school environment:

I came three years ago, and I was an assistant. I didn't speak any Finnish, and it was a kind of different experience than now. At that time, it was very nice because I was a foreigner, and I knew that this was ... I don't know ... this was my attitude or this was my personality ... the adaptation was easy. Then, it has changed when you speak Finnish and you want to be like Finns, and you have a workplace ... then, it's kind of different and more difficult. Yes I get along, but I have many difficult things. (P3)

... It doesn't always work even if you're doing very well, and you talk and greet and try to speak, people do not answer or react at all. (P6)

... If someone doesn't answer or greet me – I've met this kind of teachers – I just think that it's not my problem, then, the third or the fourth time someone may end up greeting ... (P5)

It depends on how much we are interested to be part of the school [community]; I never had a problem with that. (P7)

The participants experienced different attitudes of acceptance or denial from the school community. They mention several factors, which had an influence on their adaptation to the school environment: the school community (the teachers, the rectors, and other staff members), the school atmosphere, the school working culture, and the Finnish culture:

It depends on the teachers, on the people working at school, the school team, and the rector. If an immigrant teacher gets support from the rector and from others, yes, he/she can adapt well and can be beneficial to children and to the community. (P9)

It depends on the school. In fact, in some [schools] you are immediately taken along and people are friendly, and they greet you, but in others schools, when you're a foreigner, an immigrant, we don't talk to you, we don't discuss with you, we don't greet you ... Teachers must be an example to the pupils, and they must greet teachers regardless of their backgrounds. (P6)

... If the rector ends up instructing the teachers that we should greet each other; then, this tells quite a lot. It doesn't depend on where you come from; the atmosphere is just kind of inflamed. (P8)

I've been very lucky. I've had always a nice atmosphere. (P7)

Koskinen-Sinisalo (2015, 13) stated in her research that many immigrant teachers thought that the Finnish community was not ready to accept them as teachers. On the other hand, Virta 2015, (88–89) affirmed in her study that immigrant teachers admitted that their situation has improved when other schoolteachers and principles gradually became familiar with them, and began to appreciate their work. Lefever et al. (2014, 79) state that it is important for immigrant teachers to gain the acceptance of the host community in the workplace and in the society. The acceptance to school community strengthens the identity of immigrant teachers and encourages them to be motivated and committed to their work. It also increases their self-confidence and self-esteem.

Immigrant teachers admitted that they have had many difficulties to successfully integrate in the school community. The lack of Finnish language proficiency was one of the major challenges. Immigrant teachers believe that Finnish language skills facilitate their adaptation and may also qualify them to certain teaching positions:

My experience began in the internship ... My Finnish was not good. Maybe now, I believe that now it's better... It's easier to accommodate if you're Finnish is better. (P2)

... The rector said in the teaching training: "you can't teach English if you do not speak Finnish because English is taught in Finnish language". (P2)

Koskinen-Sinisalo (2015, 13) argues that it was difficult for immigrant teachers to meet the Finnish language proficiency requirements. Immigrant teachers are required to have a good command of Finnish language skills in order to participate in teacher's education programs (cf. Section 3.2, 22–23). Koskinen-Sinisalo (2015, 214) maintains that the adaptation of immigrant teachers may be facilitated when they are offered support to learn Finnish

language and to get acquainted with the new working environment, the school system, and the school working culture. The participants expressed similar needs:

... [We need to] learn how the school works in addition to lessons, how things are done, what kind of habits the school has, and maybe values and regulations. (P1)

... Like it has been the case for Finns, it's important to tell about the regulations to every new teacher regardless of his/her own cultural background. Especially, if one is an immigrant teacher who hasn't been in a Finnish school, he/she doesn't necessarily know how to behave in a Finnish culture. Even a Finnish teacher doesn't know how the regulations and the habits are in different schools. So, it's important that all teachers know the regulations. (P10)

The lack of trust is another challenge that immigrant teachers may encounter in their workplaces. Immigrant teachers are trusted to fulfil their teaching duties as native and foreign language teachers. However, due to the lack of Finnish language skills, they are not trusted to handle administrative work and other school matters. Finnish school staff members assume that immigrant teachers are not able to communicate in Finnish language; as a consequence, they tend to exclude them from administrative and other practical school matters. The participants are confident about their professional abilities; however, they regret not to be trusted to perform certain functions at school:

... I have had good experience of course. When no one can do my teaching in my place, in this case, they trust me well. But, when we think about administrative work or similar type of work, I've never been invited there. During the registration of the students or the parents meetings, of course, my work partner has to be with me to do these things together. He/she doesn't let me take care of these things alone. (P18)

... The special needs teacher needed an interpreter because I was not a Finn, and this was upsetting, she should have talked to me. I speak English with the pupils ... but I speak Finnish with colleagues ... (P3)

Peer support and mutual dialog help overcome cultural barriers and reduce wrong assumptions about immigrant teachers' professional skills. The participants believe that the interaction with other people at school is essential for a successful integration in the school communities. Katisko (2015, 189-190) states that the integration of immigrants in working life is regulated by governmental legislation and regional guidance instructions, but the real integration happens in the working field through the interaction with Finnish communities. Social integration and the feeling of belonging to a new working community are developed

through authentic interactive situations. The lack of peer support and the absence of mutual dialog in the school communities tend to generate uncomfortable cultural encounters:

I would get a long if there were more peer support ... I need more support. There are some issues, which are embarrassing if all the others are Finns, such as this continuous question: "How are things in your country?" When I have been living in Finland for a long time, almost for eight years, I don't exactly know how things are [in my country] since I've been all the time in Finland. (P4)

Even though they have been living in Finland for many years, immigrant teachers may feel that they are considered as outsiders compared to others teachers:

I've been living all the time in Finland, yet "you are a foreigner"; this is what somehow bothers me. (P4)

Virta (2015, 88) revealed in her research that immigrant teachers experienced positive as well as negative attitudes as members of the school community. On one hand, they were positive about their cooperation with different members of the school community, for instance with teachers, curators, nurses, principals, and parents. On the other hand, because they needed to move from one school to another, immigrant teachers were not frequently in contact with people in their workplaces, and they felt that they were outsiders. A mutual motivation to communicate with each other and to support each other facilitates the adaptation of both immigrant and Finnish communities to different cultures:

... What I have experienced during the internship is that I did my best. I received the appreciation of my mentor that things went very well, I have done a great job, and I've been brave. This way, I'm ready to do my job and to adapt accordingly. (P15)

... In some schools, where I was a new teacher, the rector came to the classroom or to the teachers' room and introduced me ... then the atmosphere was nice. Everyone greeted me and asked about my country ... it was an open friendship. (P7)

... We need to be with other teachers also in free time ... We may be with them during Christmas parties and all others kind of happenings; so, there's just one group, then they would accept [us] maybe easier. (P4)

Malin and Anis (2013, 153) argue that good relations and mutual support between immigrants and the Finnish community can promote immigrants' well-being. Social support helps reduce stress, anxiety, and loneliness. Human relations are not sufficient to preserve

immigrants' well-being. Immigrants must have an emotional support of empathy, care, love, and trust from their families and close friends, and they must have the appreciation and the support of their working community. The feeling of belonging to the community is an essential factor of well-being. Malin and Anis (2013, 153) state that ethnic communities in Finland tend to support new immigrants. Immigrants who share common cultural habits and values are willing to support each other.

Kaikkonen (2005, 55) states that intercultural learning requires a dialog, where we understand other people's viewpoints and realize our subjective and proportional perspectives. Katisko (2015, 181, 188) studied intercultural learning and intercultural competence based on the work experiences of immigrant students, who were studying towards a degree in social and health services, and who were, at the same time, working in social and health care workplaces in Finland. Katisko argues that intercultural competence is not constructed through an individual process, but requires the involvement of a whole community in a workplace. She affirms that the development of multicultural competence demands a collective reflection on different cultural working and interaction habits and manners in a working community.

The question of assimilation versus acculturation is one of the critical issues in the integration of immigrant teachers. The development of multicultural competence is the process of progressing from the attitude of assimilation to the attitude of acculturation. Korhonen (2013a, 40) explains that, when we deal with integration, we talk about acculturation, which means that immigrants may belong to a new society while they preserve their own language and culture. Acculturation requires that immigrants and the host community adapt to each other's cultures and values. The participants believe that the Finnish society does not encourage acculturation. Immigrants are supposed to assimilate to the host society's lifestyle and cultural habits. Immigrant teachers believe that they are hired in Finland to perform certain duties in order to adapt to the Finnish society:

We take immigrants, and immigrants have to learn this and that. We come to Finland as a system users, and it takes a very long time before the situation is stabilized and we all become part of the school community. (17)

Immigrant teachers are themselves divided on the issue of the adaptation to the Finnish school community. On one hand, there is an assumption that the adaptation of immigrants happens through the assimilation to the culture and the working habits of the Finnish school

community. On the other hand, there is another viewpoint, which claims that the integration happens through acculturation, where both immigrants and the host community adapt to each other's cultures and values. Those who support the assimilative approach believe that it is the responsibility of immigrant teachers to adapt to the school community, and they do not require a mutual adaptation from the host community:

... I think that immigrant teacher is mostly the one who has to adapt to the situation rather than the Finnish working community. There must be more flexibility of the immigrant teacher in order to adapt there because maybe he/she has more experience of being different rather than many Finns end up adapting to a strange culture or people. (P10)

... Adaptation is the responsibility of foreigners. We have to accommodate and cooperate; this is easier for others to accept. It's not needed to be the other way around that I'm a foreigner, now accept me since I'm different. (P9)

On the other hand, those who support the acculturation tendency believe that immigrants have their own means and habits of doing things; they do not want to imitate others, and they want to preserve their own cultural habits. Immigrant teachers, who oppose passive assimilation to the Finnish cultural and professional habits, believe that adaptation to different cultures must happen on both sides. They believe that accommodation to different cultures does not concern only immigrants; Finnish people also need to learn, understand, and adapt to other cultures:

... We have the idea that multiculturalism concerns only us the foreigners. This is not true because foreigners must be integrated somehow to the new society, but on the other hand, the new society must be able to welcome new people. So the integration, in reality, happens in both sides. (P16)

Here, in Finland, maybe nowadays multiculturalism means that we integrate all the foreigners in our own society ... and that Finns understand all the other people who come from different cultures, and accept them, and teach them Finnish culture. This is the Finnish perception of multiculturalism. It's not in any way that we learn also something from them. This is at least the kind of feeling that exists. (P14)

Awareness of cultural diversity and mutual acceptance of cultural differences facilitate the promotion of equity among members of school communities (Verma 2007, 21). Immigrant teachers demand that they are treated equally, regardless of their cultural differences. They want to be considered not as foreign people representing different cultures, but rather as

normal teachers, similar to other Finnish teachers. The participants would like to be considered for who they are; they are different, and they should be considered neither for what language they speak, nor from which country they come from, but rather for their own personality:

... We are different; on the other hand, we are the same as all the others. We're not anything exotic, the same diploma and the same school duties. (P11)

... I think, at work, we don't want any kind of label that I'm a foreigner and that I represent multiculturalism, just that I'm a teacher who goes to work, nothing different than others ... I would like to be the same as others, work in a team, and cooperate with everyone. (P13)

... In the place where I live ... even if it's a small place, many foreigners live there ... and also at school no one notices that they are foreigners; they are just school kids. We are all different, even Finns, but I never noticed that I'm ... a different person. (P7)

In addition to be treated equally, immigrant teachers would like to have equal employment opportunities as other schoolteachers, who are employed on a regular basis. Immigrant teachers are often employed on a non-regular basis and they believe that their employment situation is insecure (cf. Section 6.1, 41–42). Koskinen-Sinisalo (2015, 27) states that immigrant teachers want to get the necessary professional qualifications and obtain a steadier job. The participants explained that the major reason they were participating in the teachers' training program at the university was that they wanted to acquire the necessary professional qualifications in order to seek better employment opportunities:

In addition to subject teacher's qualifications, I would like to acquire other qualifications, which enable me to increase my employment possibilities in the future. (P14)

The integration of immigrant teachers in school communities depends on the efforts to improve the Finnish education and recruitment policies for immigrants. It is also the responsibility of Finnish school communities to facilitate the adaptation of immigrant teachers to the school cultural and working environment. However, immigrant teachers are themselves equally responsible for their integration in school communities. It depends on their own personality and their performance at school. Immigrant teachers' personal and professional identity is the key for a successful integration in the school community:

I was lately in a job training in different schools, it depends on you, it depends on yourself how you react ... If you want to make friends, you have to be friendly and really motivated. (P5)

The way immigrants negotiate their cultural identity at school depends on their own personality and on the way they introduce their culture to others (Korhonen & Myllylä 2010, 361). Cultural identity is perceived through personal behaviours and attitudes. People construct ideas on other cultures based on what they observe and what they are told:

How your own culture is seen at school, how do you want it to be seen, and how you want to bring it to your school; it all starts from your personality. No one knows everything, and everyone formulates his/her opinion about other people based on their origin and personality. Everyone is an ambassador of his own culture in a certain way ... (P8)

The teachers' personality, values, and professional skills are the basis for positive attitudes in a multicultural school environment (Talib 2005, 55). Teachers are required to have the ability to use their own attitudes, knowledge, and skills in different encounters (Lasonen et al. 2009, 14). Immigrant teachers construct their professional identity through their teaching experiences and their own linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Lefever et al. 2014, 78). Immigrant teachers believe that they must have a strong personality and they must believe in their abilities and their success, even though sometimes they have some doubts about their credentials:

I think that sometimes immigrants – including myself – underestimate themselves. They often criticize themselves. (P7)

I was in fact treated rather well. I've had occasionally some problems, and when I asked for assistance – which I did often – then they had to talk to me. (P6)

... This is a personal issue and you deal with it depending on who you are, what you have done, and how you perform the tasks, which you are appointed to ... (P17)

Lefever et al. (2014, 79) realized in their study that immigrant teachers encountered challenges in their workplace due to the lack of language skills, prejudice and discrimination; nevertheless, they managed to overcome the challenges and gained self-confidence. Regardless of the challenges they were facing in their workplaces, the participants expressed a strong belief in their professional abilities:

I know some teachers who aren't able to get a job just because of their own prejudice. They think: "I'm an immigrant, I'm worse [than others], I won't get the job anyway." But I believe for some reason that of course I can make it, of course I'm as good ... (P5)

Korhonen and Myllylä (2010, 366–371) carried out a survey in 2008 in one multinational organization in Finland to find out about the attitudes of the organization staff members towards multiculturalism and cultural diversity. The survey results indicated a strong attitude of individualism in Finnish organizations, and urged for a change of this dominant individualistic culture. The survey results also indicated that there was a need to empower immigrants' positions in the Finnish working communities by strengthening tolerance and acceptance of cultural diversity and creating shared spaces for immigrants to negotiate their cultural and professional identities. Korhonen and Myllylä state that immigrants' positions in the Finnish working communities may also be improved by developing diversity leadership policy, which supports mutual respect and equality in the working community.

Korhonen and Myllylä (2010, 371–374) suggest that organisational diversity leadership and counselling may be improved by three main practices: *multicultural and diversity policy*, *diversity training*, and *multicultural mentoring program*. The first strategy, *multicultural and diversity policy*, is about how to face diversity and multicultural challenges. The aim of this strategy is not only to reduce negative attitudes against cultural diversity, such as discrimination and racism, but more importantly to create opportunities for shared knowledge, creativity, and innovation. The second strategy, *diversity training*, aims to raise awareness of cultural differences among organization members and to promote the reflection on personal experiences in order to understand the experiences of others. The third strategy, *multicultural mentoring program*, aims to provide personal mentoring for career guidance and professional orientation. The aim of the personal mentoring program is to integrate immigrants in the work organization. The mentoring program concerns also group mentoring to facilitate dialog and collaboration between members of the working community and promote cross-cultural learning.

The suggested strategy of Korhonen and Myllylä (2010, 371–374) for the development of organizational diversity leadership can also be applied in educational institutions to empower immigrant teachers' positions in the Finnish school communities. Multicultural and diversity policy in school communities may reduce negative attitudes towards people with different cultural backgrounds and enhance mutual dialog, intercultural cooperation, and cross-cultural learning. Diversity training policies for schoolteachers can be applied on the

national level by integrating teachers' diversity training programs as part of teacher's education degree programs at universities. Diversity training programs for schoolteachers and other staff members can also be arranged locally in the educational institutions to facilitate the promotion of tolerance and acceptance of different cultures. Multicultural mentoring programs for immigrant teachers have been implemented in the form of continuing education programs, such as Specima education program for immigrant teachers (cf. Section 3.2, 22–23). Immigrant teacher's education programs are essential to facilitate the integration of immigrants in school communities and guide them in their professional orientations. Multicultural mentoring programs can also be implemented at schools in the form of group mentoring to facilitate dialog and cooperation between members of the school working community, Finns and immigrants, and promote cross-cultural learning.

The research results demonstrated that immigrant teachers were motivated to contribute to the promotion of multicultural education regardless of the challenges they have encountered in their workplaces. The results showed that the participation of immigrant teachers as active members in promoting multicultural education is a shared responsibility, which requires a mutual dialog and intercultural cooperation between immigrants and the Finnish community. As it is required that the school staff members must facilitate the integration of immigrant teachers, it is equally essential that immigrant teachers themselves take the responsibility to be active members in the school community and accommodate to the school environment. Regardless of the inequality of employment opportunities and the discrimination and prejudices encountered in their workplaces, immigrant teachers have gained along their work experiences self-confidence and professional competence. Nevertheless, they were aware that they have to improve their professional skills in order to cooperate with other school members and equally contribute to the promotion of multicultural learning.

The aim of this research was to reach a deeper understanding of the situation of immigrant teachers in Finnish elementary and lower-secondary schools and contribute in raising awareness about their important role in the promotion of multicultural education. The next chapter reflects on the significance of the above-outlined research results based on the research problem and the research background literature. In addition, the chapter contains a reflection on the research ethical questions and an evaluation of the research work.

7 DISCUSSION

The first part of the chapter reflects on the ethical questions and evaluates the research process and the research work with emphasis on the author's position in this research work. The second part of the chapter provides a reflection on the research results and their significance in the related research field.

7.1 *Research evaluation*

In this research study, ethical questions were explained and justified, and the research work was evaluated throughout the research process.

7.1.1 Research ethics

A good scientific research practice is based on confidentiality and anonymity, which are fundamental in research work. There must be a respect of the dignity and the self-determination of the participants. A researcher ought to uphold a relation of trust towards the participants and the community. Researchers are trusted to use appropriate research methods and authentic data to obtain trustable results. Researchers must proceed accordingly to satisfy the trust of the participants and the community at large. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 20–24.)

Ethical issues related to the research process, the data collection, the data analysis, and the research results must be taken into consideration in a research work. The researcher must justify why a particular topic of study is chosen and whether it is ethically correct to study that topic. One must also justify whether the desired information is obtained through the data collection methods. One is responsible for the interpretations of the research data and the deduction of research results in a rigorous manner. Equally important, one must protect the identity and privacy of the interviewed participants. The names of the participants must remain anonymous in the research report. One must be ethically responsible to explain how the research analysis is processed, and how the results are

obtained. The presentation of the results in the research report, alone without any description of the analysis, is not sufficient. The description of the research process must be transparent in the research report in order to enable potential evaluation of the ethical issues. One has to consider these research ethical issues step by step with a critical self-evaluation along the research process. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 23.)

This research respected the principles of a good scientific research practice. The description of the research process was transparent in this research report and all the research methodological choices were described and justified. This research was a study about the contribution of immigrant teachers to the promotion of multicultural education in basic education in Finland. This topic has not been thoroughly investigated in earlier studies. Several research studies investigated the experiences of immigrant teachers in their workplaces and their conceptions of multiculturalism in Finnish schools, but there has not been a particular emphasis on the role of immigrant teachers in the promotion of multiculturalism.

When the topic of this research work was selected, ethical issues that may hinder the data collection procedure have been thoroughly investigated. For example, it is possible that immigrant teachers might not want to talk about personal experiences, or reveal any negative situations and attitudes, which they may have encountered at schools. In fact, in some research studies on immigrants, researchers noticed when they interviewed immigrants that they were reluctant to talk about negative experiences or attitudes. For these reasons, when choosing an appropriate data collection method, the ones that may reduce possible tension and sensitivity of the participants were selected.

Group interview was a convenient data collection method to generate information in a spontaneous conversation. Participants were motivated to participate in the group interviews because they were familiar with each other. The questionnaire helped the participants familiarise themselves with the research topic prior to the interviews. In the questionnaire and the interviews, questions about personal sensitive matters were purposely avoided. The questions did not provoke any negative reactions, and the participants provided their answers freely. The questionnaire and the interviews provided adequate information for the research questions. Participants expressed positives and negatives views and experiences along with suggestions for improvements. All of these constitute the data reported and analysed in this research report.

The participants were informed before the interview about the research topic and the purpose of the research. They were told that the information, which they provided, would be treated confidentially and used exclusively to write this master's thesis, and that no one else would access the provided material. They were instructed that participation in the questionnaire and the group interview was voluntary, and that their identity would be kept anonymous along the research process and in the research report. The participants were informed that the group interviews would be recorded and that the recorded information would remain confidential. They were asked to provide an informed consent that the information, which they provided in the questionnaire and the interviews, could be used in this research work. Along the research process and in the research report, the participants' dignity and their willingness to participate in the interview and provide information for this research have been duly respected. The participants were free to express their opinions without any pressure or constraints. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 22–23.)

The participants' opinions were reported in the research report honestly and confidentially with respect to their anonymity. In the research analysis, all participants presented their views and opinions. All opinions were respected and taken into consideration in the data collection and the data analysis. However, due to the large amount of data, it was not possible to include all the information obtained from the interviews in the analysis. The research analysis was processed through the description and the interpretation of the relevant research data with respect to the research questions and within the research theoretical framework. The research results were obtained based on the analysis of the research data, which was interconnected to theory and to related literature. Research results were compared to previous research studies conducted in the related research field.

Relevant references from the literature were duly and correctly cited in the research report by indicating for each reference the corresponding author(s)' last name(s) or the name of the organization, the year of publication, and the reference page number(s). URL links were indicated to electronic references in the reference list including the date when they were retrieved. The research report was checked with Turnitin program. As it was important to take into consideration the research ethical issues, the reliability of the presented research work was thoroughly considered as explained in the next section.

7.1.2 Research reliability

In qualitative research, the reliability of a research work refers to the compatibility of the description, the explanation, and the interpretation of a research phenomenon. In a qualitative research work, reliability concerns all the whole research process. While reflecting on our own resolutions, we need to care about the research process and the reliability of the research work. The starting point of reliability in a qualitative research work is the researcher's open subjectivity and the acknowledgment, that he/she is the essential research tool of his/her research. Reliability is also the research community social agreement about what we consider today as a scientific research. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 211; Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 24–25.)

Reliability in qualitative research is defined as the degree of credibility and assertiveness in a research work. In this research, credibility and assertiveness were assessed along the research process to evaluate the compatibility of the conceptualization and the interpretation of the research results with the conceptions of the participants. The reliability of this research was also assessed on the basis of the dependability of the research work on precedent conditions of the research phenomenon. In addition, reliability was assessed through the conformability of the research work to previous research studies. The research results indicated that previous research studies supported this research work. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 212–213; Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 25.)

Credibility and assertiveness were also evaluated to assure that the research results and interpretations were produced rigorously and coherently to the readers. In principles, a research work does not produce a complete understanding of a research problem. This research work provided a particular description of the studied phenomenon. The research target and the studied phenomenon were examined with an unbiased point of view; however, absolute objectiveness is not possible; we cannot totally disengage and disregard his/her own thoughts. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 17; Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 20, 25.)

The research credibility and assertiveness were improved along the research process by a critical and evaluative self-assessment attitude. I was positioned, from the beginning of the research process with a curious and sceptical mind by asking all kind of questions and finding answers to them: why did I study this? How did I study it? Why did I choose this method to collect and analyse the data? Did I have other choices? What were the consequences of my choices? How did I stand to the results of my research? What kind of decisions might be

drawn from my research? I was continuously looking where the research was leading, where the decisions and the choices were leading, and what was their significance to the research. As much as I had many choices regarding the processing of my research, I was responsible for all the choices, which I have made. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 20, 24, 27.)

One of the major questions in the assessment of the reliability of this research work was the selection of the research topic: why did I choose this topic? I have explained previously the reason why I selected this research topic (Section 1, 6). The significance of the topic of this research and its relevance to the research field may confirm the reliability of this research work. Data saturation and data representativeness were important issues in the assessment of the research reliability. How much information was needed so that the research work would be reliable? Were the data sufficiently representative? In qualitative research, the research data require a reflection on their theoretical significance in relation to the research problem. The data saturation is determined depending on whether the research data are sufficient to answer the research questions. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 60–61, 216.) In this research, the research data provided sufficient information to answer the research questions based on the research problem and within the research theoretical framework.

The generalizability of the research results is a problematic issue in the assessment of reliability in qualitative research. The problem is that qualitative research is not concerned by the generalizability of research results, as it is the case in quantitative research studies. Qualitative research is in principle a case study research, which is situated at a certain time and in a certain place, and it cannot be generalized. However, a holistic interpretation of the research results may form an entity, which may be generalized, and this may increase the reliability of the research results. The generalizability of the research results may be possible when the selected research subjects share relatively similar experiences and they are interested in the research topic. It is also possible to achieve a potential generalizability of the research results when the research results are compared to previous research studies. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 65–66.)

In this research, I have taken into account the above-mentioned criteria of the generalizability of qualitative research results. Immigrant teachers who participated in the interview and provided information for this research study shared relatively similar experiences, and they were interested to discuss the topic of this research. The interpretation of the research results was based on previous research studies conducted on immigrants in the related research field. The aim of this research was to construct a holistic understanding

of the experiences and the opinions of immigrant teachers as active members of the school communities and to achieve a deeper understanding of the significance of their contribution to promoting multicultural education in Finnish schools.

7.2 Research discussion

This research focused on the contribution of immigrant teachers in the promotion of multicultural education in elementary and lower-secondary schools in Finland. Due to the recent increase of immigrant population in Finland, the promotion of multicultural education became a necessity in Finnish schools. The promotion of multicultural education is considered in education policies a shared task of all members of the school communities. However, previous research studies stated that immigrant teachers, who were supposed to be an integral part of the school communities, have had difficulties to adapt to Finnish school environments, and, as a consequence, they were not sufficiently active members in their workplaces. The purpose of this research work was to find out how immigrant teachers could contribute to the promotion of multicultural education in Finnish schools. The purpose of this research was also to find out what might be the adequate environment, which could facilitate the contribution of immigrant teachers to promoting multicultural education.

The research results affirm that multicultural cooperation between Finnish and immigrant members of the school communities is the basis for the promotion of multicultural teaching and learning. The promotion of multicultural education is a shared task between all members of the school communities, including immigrant teachers. There has been an assumption among education communities that immigrant teachers have been generally hired at schools to teach immigrant school children their native language and religion. Research results revealed that immigrant teachers were also involved in other school activities related to the promotion of multiculturalism. Immigrant teachers, whom I interviewed, were active, among other school members, in organizing cultural events, such as international day and Language day. They also assumed the responsibility of organizing school exchange programs with twin schools abroad. Immigrant teachers are willing to participate as active members to enhance multicultural teaching and learning. They are willing to assume responsibilities in addition to teaching native languages and religions provided that these extra activities are integrated in the school teaching programs.

The research results confirm that immigrant teachers have the ability to participate in the development of multicultural teaching and learning. Previous research studies stated that immigrant teachers have gained professional skills along their work experiences, and they were ready to assume other responsibilities at school. Nevertheless, immigrant teachers are aware that they need to improve their professional skills in order to meet the requirement of teacher's qualifications. The participation in teacher's education trainings is a good opportunity for immigrant teachers to improve their teaching skills and get acquainted with the Finnish education system. However, immigrant teachers need to be encouraged to participate in teacher's education programs.

In a recent evaluation of the functionality and the effectiveness of immigrant teachers' continuing education program Specima, it is stated that there is a need in the future for immigrant teachers' education and that its implementation has to be based on the expected needs of the labor market. Immigrants who were interviewed during the evaluation of Specima education program declared that the education program had little impact on their employability. Immigrants stated that the reasons for the lack of employment opportunities were the difficult situation of the labor market, the employers' biased attitudes, and the lack of own language skills. (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture 2016, 28–29.)

Immigrant teachers are willing to participate as full members of the school communities in promoting multicultural teaching and learning provided that they are employed on a permanent basis. Virta (2015, 89) mentions that the career development of immigrant teachers was made possible by increasing the number of teaching hours and making their working conditions more stable, but the lack of permanent working contracts remains a major problem. Because they are recruited on a non-regular basis, mainly as part-time teachers, immigrant teachers are discouraged from participating in other school activities outside of their teaching duties. Virta (2015, 91) states that immigrant teachers want to accentuate their role as teachers not as interpreters. They claim that their work consists primarily in providing native-language support teaching. However, in addition to teaching, they may voluntarily help with translation whenever it is needed. Schools may hire interpreters if needed when they meet with immigrant pupils' parents; however, native-language support teachers are more knowledgeable than interpreters in school matters. One solution to this problematic situation would be to hire immigrant teachers at schools on a permanent basis, so that part of their work duties would include counseling and cooperation with pupils' parents and other school staff members.

Immigrant teachers are convinced that participation in the promotion of multicultural education requires the teacher's own initiative to be an active member in a school community. Immigrant teacher's personality and professional identity constitute the basis for a successful integration in a school community. Immigrant teachers believe in their abilities and their success regardless of the challenges encountered in their workplaces. They understand that the integration in the school community requires the adaptation to the school environment and the school cultural and working policies. However, they insist on the fact that social interaction and the feeling of belonging to a new working environment are developed through authentic interactive situations. Mutual dialog and interaction between members of the school communities increase cultural sensitivity and facilitate the tolerance of different cultures and the ability to adapt to different cultural contexts.

Immigrant teachers play a significant role in supporting and strengthening immigrant pupils' cultural identity. Immigrant children are encouraged to learn their own native language and preserve their culture. Immigrant teachers participate in promoting immigrant pupils' well-being by helping them overcome problems, which they may encounter at school. Immigrant teachers should be considered as mediators between the school Finnish staff members and immigrant pupils and their parents. They can explain to Finnish school communities immigrant pupils' cultural habits and practices and mediate the Finnish culture to immigrant pupils and their parents. The promotion of immigrant teachers' integration in school communities may help improve the attitudes of Finnish school communities towards immigrants, and may eventually have a strong impact on the development of mutual understanding and mutual tolerance of cultural diversity. Education policies may contribute to raise awareness among school communities for a positive integration of immigrant teachers in school environment; nevertheless, it is primarily the responsibility of both immigrant teachers and the school Finnish staff members to be motivated and active in promoting intercultural cooperation and mutual tolerance of different cultures.

The research results confirm that the aim of multicultural education is not only about the recognition of immigrant pupils' cultural backgrounds and the promotion of their integration in the host community. The results affirm that multicultural education is primarily about raising awareness of cultural diversity among all pupils regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Results confirm also that the aim of multicultural education is to enrich all pupils' own cultures and to guide them to construct a wider understanding of different cultures in order to learn how to adapt in different cultural encounters.

Although the Finnish national core curriculum for basic education insists on the acknowledgement of different languages and cultures in school teaching, there is an assumption among school communities that foreign cultures are taught to immigrant pupils in their own native language and religion lessons, and that they are not relevant in other school subjects (Virta 2015, 90). Research results disapprove this assumption and assert that it is important to teach foreign cultures to all school pupils regardless of their cultural backgrounds and to include foreign cultures in school textbooks and other teaching materials. Research results demonstrated that immigrant teachers, who were teaching foreign languages such as English, Spanish, and Russian to Finnish pupils, integrated in their teaching programs different kind of cultural activities to promote multicultural learning.

The research results confirm that the implementation of multicultural education is not only a reform of the curriculum, the teaching material, and the teaching methods. The experiences of immigrant teachers, which were brought out in this research, illustrate that multicultural education is about developing an intercultural cooperative teaching and learning, which requires a broader change in attitudes, beliefs, and practices. Research results confirm that attitudes towards different cultures can be improved through authentic interaction with people with different cultural backgrounds and through the reflection beyond one's own cultural reality. Immigrant teachers assert that stereotyping and prejudices about different cultures can be reduced when there is an authentic dialog and a mutual understanding between members of the school communities. Research results affirm that multicultural education is not simply an ideology; it is primarily a commitment and an action to promoting equity for all members of the school communities regardless of their cultural backgrounds.

The results obtained in this research work presented a detailed explanation and an interpretation of the research phenomenon and provided answers to the research problem within the research theoretical framework and based on the author's intuition. Nevertheless, this research work has its own limitations. This qualitative research focused on the significance of the role of immigrant teachers in the promotion of a multicultural learning. This work provided a particular point of view of the research phenomenon. Another research method may produce different outcomes about the same research phenomenon. The collection of research data targeted particular research subjects who represented certain schools in certain cities in Finland and at a certain time. Immigrant teachers, who provided information in this research, were representatives of their own workplaces, and they did not

represent all immigrant teachers in Finland. If other immigrant teachers were interviewed, they might have provided different information on the research phenomenon, which might have led to different research outcomes. This research focused particularly on immigrant teachers without taking into account the opinions of Finnish teachers and other Finnish school staff members. In this regard, the research results were based only on the viewpoints of immigrant teachers. The research would have possibly had different outcomes if Finnish teachers, other Finnish school staff members, or other people in the research field had participated in the interviews and provided information for this research; this may be considered in future studies.

The research data were collected through group interviews in the frame of theme interviews. Data collection method accentuated the collective participation of interviewees and the diversity of their viewpoints; nevertheless, the participants' personal opinions were taken into consideration in the research data analysis. Another data collection method, which highlights individual opinions and experiences of participants, such as individual interviews, may produce other detailed information and lead to different research results. The research data analysis was conducted through content analysis, which focused mainly on the explanation and the interpretation of the participants' opinions on a certain social encounter, without considering the nonverbal communication between the participants in the group interviews. In research studies we need to limit our methodological choices and focus on particular target of the research. Based on the experience, which I have had with group interviews, it would be possible to observe and monitor the interaction and the nonverbal communication of the participants and process the data analysis through discourse analysis method.

Beyond these limitations, which can be improved in further research studies, this research can be beneficial particularly to school communities and also to the Finnish society in general. The aim of this research is to bridge the gap between Finnish and immigrant teachers in order to build a better understanding of a multicultural school community and to promote the well-being of all members of the school communities. Furthermore, this research aims to enhancing intercultural communication and multicultural cooperation between immigrants and the host community. Räsänen (2005, 20–21, 30) states that multicultural cooperation is needed in a world where global challenges bind societies together. In multicultural social encounters, people learn how to see things from different perspectives and how to widen their perceptions and worldviews. Multicultural cooperation demands a

reflection on one's own cultural background and an awareness of other cultures. It is a mutual learning process, where people of different cultures are willing to learn from each other and share common values, such as mutual respect and appreciation, sincere exchange of ideas, and motivation and commitment to mutual learning and intercultural dialog. This research can participate in raising awareness about the need for a multicultural cooperation in the Finnish society.

This research can also be beneficial to the education research field and to other potential research studies. The research results obtained in this research work may be transferred to further studies on the development of immigrant teachers' professional skills, for example the development of the continuing education programs for immigrant teachers. This research may be beneficial for further studies on how to integrate immigrant employees in other workplaces in different sectors, such as health care centres and social welfare institutions. This research provides also information for further studies on the implementation of the new Finnish national core curriculum for basic education (2014) regarding the support of cultural diversity and the recognition of cultural differences in school communities.

One of the major challenges in basic education in Finland is how to face the increased number of immigrant children at schools due to the recent increase of asylum-seekers. This research may be useful for future studies on the development of improved procedures for the integration of immigrant pupils in school communities. Last but not least, this research may contribute to further research studies on the development of intercultural communication skills and the promotion of equity and justice for all members of the school communities regardless of their cultural backgrounds.

8 CONCLUSION

We live in a world of globalization, international mobility, and cross-cultural communication. Societies are becoming more and more multicultural, and people ought to live together and share common values and interests. Due to the co-existence of various cultural groups in multicultural societies, human relations need to be based more than ever on shared values of tolerance, solidarity, and respect of all cultures. Multicultural education has been developed across the world in order to promote equity and justice for all citizens regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Multicultural education plays a significant role in raising awareness of cultural diversity and developing intercultural communication skills.

Multicultural education does not address only the needs of immigrant children. It is not only about teaching immigrants their own native language and culture. In a multicultural society, multicultural education should address all people with different cultural backgrounds, immigrants and host communities. People have different cultures, beliefs, values, and worldviews, and they tend to preserve and secure their cultural identities. Nevertheless, in a multicultural society, people with different cultural backgrounds need to open up to other cultures and should learn to adapt in different cultural encounters. Intercultural cooperation between all members of the school communities is needed in order to promote multicultural learning for all school children.

This research work was an attempt to raise awareness about the need to integrate immigrant teachers in Finnish school communities and to facilitate their contribution to the promotion of multicultural education. According to a report of the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (2010, 7), immigrants were more often marginalized in working life and in education compared to Finnish people. The report states that the job market needs to benefit from immigrants' professional skills. Immigrant teachers need to be offered equal opportunities for employment to facilitate their integration in the Finnish society and to promote multicultural education for all school children regardless of their cultural backgrounds.

Reflecting on the reform of the national integration strategy in Finland, the Finnish minister of Justice and Employment declared in a press conference on the 10th of February 2016 that employment is the best mean to integrate successful asylum applicants. He also stated that employment is the most effective mean to prevent discrimination. The integration of immigrants happens through participation in working life. While being at work, immigrants learn the host community's native language and accommodate themselves to the Finnish society; at the same time, Finns get a chance to meet immigrants and learn to adapt to their cultures. (Kurki-Suonio 2016.)

A recent report on the integration and the education of immigrants in Finland (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture 2016, 28–29) states that, due to the recent increase of asylum-seekers, the recruitment of immigrant teachers in basic education should be increased. It is important to recruit more immigrant teachers in order to meet the needs for the education of immigrant pupils. However, it is equally important to improve the recruitment policies of immigrant teachers and to consider their employment on a regular basis according to the regular employment policies and procedures for the recruitment of schoolteachers.

The development of multicultural education requires a major reform in the Finnish education policies and the Finnish education system. Recently, there has been a reform of the national core curriculum for basic education (2014), which insists on the acknowledgement and the integration of different cultures in regular school subjects. This reform should be followed by creative and innovative practical procedures in order to secure a successful implementation of the new core curriculum. One of the procedures could be to offer immigrant teachers more responsibilities other than teaching native languages and other religions.

The Finnish national core curriculum for basic education (2014) states that people with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds encounter each others in basic education and get acquainted with different values, beliefs and practices. In this regard, immigrant teachers are willing to participate in a mutual cooperation with all members of the school communities to facilitate the education of immigrant children and promote multicultural education for all school children.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1(3)

Referral letter¹

Hello,

I am a student at the University of Tampere School of Education. I am studying for a master's degree in lifelong learning and education. My master's research study is about the contribution of immigrant teachers to the promotion of multicultural education in Finnish schools.

I am kindly asking you to participate in this research work. I am sending you a questionnaire about my research study. I agreed with your instructor that, on the 15 of January 2016, during your in-class session, we discuss in groups about the content of the questionnaire. New ideas may come out in the conversation, and you may have additional thoughts. If you agree, I will record the conversation to be able to conduct the data analysis.

The participation in the questionnaire and the group interviews is voluntary. Your answers to the questionnaire and the recorded conversation are treated confidentially, and your identity remains anonymous in the research process and the research report.

You may answer the questionnaire in English language. In the group interviews, we use Finnish language, and you may also speak in English.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for any additional information.

Tampere, 10th of December 2015
Raoudha Skhiri
skhiri.raoudha.x@student.uta.fi

¹ This referral letter was originally sent to the students as a cover letter in the electronic questionnaire in both English and Finnish languages.

Questionnaire²

I. Background information

1. Where are you originally from?
2. How long have you been living in Finland?

II. Work experience

3. Where have you been working in Finland?
4. How long have you been working at school in Finland?
5. In which city in Finland have you been working at school?

III. Education

6. Why would you like to receive class teacher's qualifications?
7. What sort of skills have you gained from class teacher's education?

IV. Multicultural education at school

8. How do you understand multicultural education?
9. How is multiculturalism taken into account in your school?
10. In your opinion, how can we better take multiculturalism into account in your school?

V. Community and intercultural encounter at school

11. How do you adapt to your school environment?
12. How is immigrant teacher treated at your school?
13. How should immigrant teacher be integrated in a school community?

VI. Participation in promoting multicultural education at school

14. What does the promotion of multicultural education require in your school?
15. How do you describe yourself as a promoter of multiculturalism in your school?
16. How could you better participate in promoting multiculturalism in your school?
17. In your opinion, how should the role of immigrant teacher be emphasized in multicultural education?

☐ My answers can be used in the master's thesis.

² This is a translation of the original questionnaire in Finnish language. The original questionnaire was in an electronic format.

Frame of theme interview³

1. Multiculturalism at school

- a. Acknowledgement of multiculturalism
 - How is multiculturalism taken into account in your school?
- b. Appreciation of multiculturalism
 - How is multiculturalism appreciated in your school?

2. Community and intercultural encounter at school

- a. Adaptation to school environment
 - How does immigrant teacher adapt to Finnish school environment?
- b. Intercultural encounter
 - How is immigrant teacher treated in your school?

3. Participation in promoting multicultural education at school

- a. Integration in school community
 - How can immigrant teacher be integrated in a school community?
- b. Active membership in school community
 - How can immigrant teacher be an active member in a school community?
- c. Intercultural cooperation
 - What sort of intercultural cooperation immigrant teacher can have at school?
- d. Representation of different cultural groups
 - How can immigrant teacher represent different cultural groups?

³ This is a translation of the original frame of the theme interview in Finnish language.